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**IN THE NEXT ISSUE**

‘Communication and disaster mitigation’ will be the theme of the 4/2006 issue of *Media Development*. Natural and human-made disasters occur regularly throughout the world. How do the mass media respond to them? What role can communications play to help people cope with disasters?

**Cover Photo**

The front cover photo won WACC’s Photographic Competition 2006. Sent in by Machchss, it was simply called ‘Drama’. In the jury’s opinion, the image asks important and awkward questions about the relationship between commercial advertising and the brutality of poverty that many people in the world face daily.
Increasing the capacity of poor and marginalised people to use communication in order to improve their lives is recognised by many NGOs as vital to a more just future for all.

As the Communication for Social Change Consortium states, ‘When people most affected by social inequity have the confidence and abilities to access, manage and control the processes, tools and content of communication, development efforts are more sustainable and effective.’

South and North, information and knowledge are essential for people to respond adequately and successfully to the opportunities of political, social, economic and cultural change. But to be useful, knowledge and information has to be available, accessible, and communicated effectively among people.

And even though they are connected to global sources and networks through modern telecommunications, or learn about health care from folk proverbs and traditional medicine, or listen to radio broadcasts on HIV/AIDS, people still communicate and learn best when they act together, locally.

What is often overlooked is that communication for development and social change must be systematically planned, coordinated and implemented. Wasteful duplication has to be eliminated. Communication systems must be established to meet the needs of all involved and a working partnership created with national ministries for development, the environment, women’s affairs, social services, health, and information and communication systems.

In particular, rural communication systems should include NGOs, universities, adult capacity-building centres and the private sector. Without them, millions upon millions of people in developing countries are likely to be excluded from a wide range of information and knowledge, with the rural poor in particular remaining isolated from both community media and from new information and communication technologies.

What are the main challenges? According to the Panos Network, the real force and meaning of communication for development lies in universal access to means of communication, freedom of speech and media, inclusion of all members of society in information exchange, and participation by poor and marginalised people in local and national decision-making. Clearly, uneven access, exclusion and lack of participation mar large segments of many societies worldwide.

In addition, but no less importantly, there has to be horizontal communication within communities and societies, in which issues, attitudes and norms are debated, problems solved and perceptions changed. Public debate at all levels is a key factor in bringing a broad range of opinions, understanding, experience, interests to addressing issues.

And one of the keys to constructive debate is journalism in the public-interest: national and community media that present, interpret and contextualise information to make it useful and meaningful.

Information and communication technologies are often put forward as a panacea for development problems, yet urgent questions remain unanswered.

How do ICTs affect economic development in low-income countries? How do they affect poor people in these countries and in rural areas in particular? What policies and programmes facilitate or hinder ICTs’ potential to enhance development and to include poor stakeholders?

Then there are other issues: ‘Access to information through ICTs is a question not only of connectivity but also of capability to use the new tools and relevant content provided in accessible and useful forms.

Connectivity has been a priority, and it is a prerequisite for the other two “Cs”. But given the speed at which technologies are evolving and can move — unconstrained by overly restrictive licenses and global patenting — costs could fall significantly, facilitating adoption. Hence, we should emphasize the need for all three “Cs” to progress in tandem.’

The high expectations of the Millennium Development Goals — especially eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and establishing a global partnership for development — mean that communication must play a crucial role in enabling people to take control of their lives, to ensure that policy-makers listen to their voices, and to contest the power structures that dominate society.

And perhaps what is really needed and often absent altogether is a fourth “C”, one that recognises that people matter: connectivity, capability, content, and compassion.

Note
Where is communication in the Millennium Development Goals?

Silvio Waisbord

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are one of the most ambitious global commitments ever to improving social conditions, particularly those affecting the most excluded and marginalized populations worldwide. As such, they are a blueprint to motivate, guide, inspire and hold accountable governments, donors and organizations. But where is communication?

Like any list, particularly one elaborated and agreed upon at high policy level, the MDGs are incomplete. Anybody who feels passionate about development surely finds it insufficient to mobilize the global collective behind key issues at a crucial juncture. Just to mention two goals: Reducing violence, a condition that not only affects millions everyday but also accounts for the persistent difficulties in achieving a host of social goals, is notoriously absent. Similarly, improving access to safe water, an everyday luxury for one-third of the world population, should have been listed too.

As some who has worked and taught development communication for 20 years, I cannot help but notice that communication goals are also absent. Considering that communication adjectives are frequently used to describe our information-saturated times, the absence of communication goals is striking. Although information and media industries are some of the largest and most dynamic worldwide, commerce and politics invest astronomical amounts on ‘communication’, and information networks have become the backbone of a globalized world, communication is not mentioned in the MDGs. While everyone seems to think that communication is important, apparently it is not crucial enough to make it onto the list.

Furthermore, this absence is particularly noticeable considering that, for decades, international organizations alongside policymakers, scholars, activists and professionals have encouraged the global community to rally behind fundamental communication goals such as the democratization of means of expression, and the building and sustaining of tolerant and pluralistic societies.

Communication as a set of instruments

This absence offers an opportunity to reflect upon the status of development communication in global policymaking. Perhaps the ‘communication’ community has not made a persuasive argument to convince power-holders to take communication goals seriously. If true, it will be ironic since, given professional reputations, communication professionals should know how to advocate for their own field. It is also plausible that they have not been as powerful and organized as other interest groups to influence the MDG agenda, or that decision-makers are not sensitized enough to the merits of communication goals.

Calling attention to this gap is motivated neither by professional pride nor by the belief that values and objectives dear to our field should be recognized as important as maternal health and children’s education. The intention is rather different: to point out the obvious fact that as long as it is not explicitly present in the MDGs, communication is implicitly relegated to playing an auxiliary, instrumental role to achieve other objectives.

Why is it important? Simply, as long as goals are defined in terms of health, education, or poverty-reduction, organizations and specialists in those areas define appropriate strategies, earmark resources, hire staff and decide other programmatic components. Media analysts know all too well that framing issues and...
problems in terms of news or fictional content largely determines what is discussed and what solutions are considered.

Likewise, having defined specific indicators, the MDGs automatically determine that development is foremost a matter of improving health, educational and gender conditions. All other definitions of development, a perennial topic of discussion in communication and other social sciences, need to engage with the prevailing understanding that underlies the MDGs. Once ‘development’ is synonymous with specific indicators (e.g. percentage of patients who complete tuberculosis treatment, the percentage of girls who complete primary education), other definitions of development (from ‘the opening up of opportunities’ to ‘the participation of communities in debating and shaping their own lives’) need to be reviewed and adjusted.

Another important consequence is that institutions specifically endowed with health, poverty, and educational mandates wield tremendous influence to determine how to achieve those goals. Medical approaches are likely to be proposed as best suited to redressing health inequalities, economic strategies are submitted to solve poverty, and so on.

Where does that leave communication? As a field of study and practice, it is frequently expected to demonstrate to other disciplines its contributions to the MDGs. How does communication help to mitigate health, education, gender, and socio-economic inequalities? What is its value-added to programmes designed by non-communication experts? Why should medical doctors, economists or policy wonks assign funding for communication? In a world of limited resources and professional boundaries, they would rather prefer to earmark funds for programmatic components that they are more familiar with.

These questions are both challenging and uncomfortable. They challenge communication to document the impact of their knowledge and practice on other fields; and they put communication in the unfair situation of having to prove its merits, as if all other disciplines have impeccable records in terms of development effectiveness. (When was the last time the medical sciences or economics had to prove their contributions to a jury of journalists, press lawyers and community leaders who held the purse strings?)

Because communication is mostly foreign to the conference rooms and hallways where high-level decisions are discussed and agreed, arguments about its contributions often run into existing expectations and pre-assigned roles.

**Going beyond ‘information’**

How is communication perceived? Without hard evidence, it is difficult to provide a solid answer applicable to all cases and organizations. All generalizations are likely to miss nuances and exceptions. However, if my experience and countless stories are representative, one could confidently say that communication is primarily seen as a group of information dissemination tools. It is associated with press releases, brochures, posters, websites, and message design. It is the stuff that information officers do. It is associated with information technologies that people encounter and turn on everyday. In our age of spin, 24/7 news, brands, publicity tours, media politics, and information technologies in virtually every living space, hardly anybody who works in development organizations needs to be persuaded that information matters.

For centuries, academics, philosophers, and essayists have vigorously discussed the broad meanings of communication. They also warned about the perils of information reductionism, that is, making communication synonymous with information transmission, production, reception, or technologies. Communication is about the potential transformative power of the exchange of ideas, deliberation and negotiation over a myriad common and private affairs, and participation in public life. However, the hegemony of the idea of ‘communication *qua* information’ suggests that comprehensive understandings of communication remain a well-kept secret from the lay public. Communication is still basically locked into the information paradigm.

The issue is not whether communication is perceived as making a contribution to the MDGs, but rather, what kind of communication is often expected and funded.
There is no shortage of development programmes with communication components. Experiences in advocacy for the MDGs are particularly illuminating. From lobbying to media campaigns, low- and high-profile advocacy efforts continue to take place. Awareness-raising activities among governments and influential publics in the North and the South are aimed at renewing commitment and increasing funding for development policies. Organizations are actively mobilized to achieve two central advocacy goals.

First, they intend to bring attention to specific issues (e.g. gender-based violence, dramatic gaps in the rate of school drop-outs between boys and girls, the devastating impact of the AIDS crisis among orphans and young children). Second, they aim to advocate for specific policies (e.g. making anti-retroviral drugs available to people living with AIDS, passing and enforcing laws against sexual violence, funding the development and introduction of new vaccines). With the hope of influencing public debates and policy priorities, cadres of journalists and media activists exchange ideas about expanding and improving coverage of development issues.

These activities are premised on the idea that advocacy is fundamental to affecting policies in order to provide a conducive environment for pro-poor programmes. Without appropriate policies and adequate funding, redressing social conditions at the ground level is more difficult and less sustainable. Without involving decision-makers and opinion leaders, generating social change in communities is exceedingly problematic.

Unfortunately, too often advocacy is caught up on information premises, assuming that disseminating information about an issue or programme is sufficient to build support. Information alone is unlikely to move actors to action. Furthermore, disseminating information may, at best, only have short-term impact. What is needed is a nuanced understanding of how decision-making processes work, and what incentives and rewards to support development policies exist among key publics.

Successful experiences show that, more than one-shot informational activities, broad grass-roots coalitions are necessary to sustain momentum for development causes. Information activities to gain visibility and inform stakeholders are only one among many strategies (e.g. putting pressure, engaging leaders, mobilizing communities) to gain support. The remarkable progress made by the global AIDS movement for the past two decades shows that successful communication is more than the production of a series of brochures to influence policy decisions. It requires multiple forms of communication work, including collaboration between medical experts and lay talent, a diversity of media forums, the mobilization of celebrities and ‘anonymous’ champions, the empowerment of people living with AIDS, the strengthening of community networks, and so on.

Only then can advocacy avoid falling into the all-too-common, flavour-of-the-month approach to setting development agendas: from high peaks to quietly disappearing from the public eye. As long as development initiatives have weak roots among stakeholders and communities, information campaigns are likely to be just flash-in-the-pan activities that are, predictably, replaced by other priorities and distractions.

The limits of the information paradigm are also found in communication programmes intended to influence the knowledge, attitudes and practices of communities. There is no shortage of so-called ‘communication’ materials to increase knowledge about a myriad of issues. Consider health literacy interventions to support programmes such as the promotion of oral rehydration salts, breastfeeding, vaccination, and institutional childbirth. A growing body of evidence shows that, if properly designed and implemented, messages are effective in increasing knowledge and understanding of the benefits of ideal behaviours.

However, ‘messaging’ is not the only way by which communication can effectively assist development initiatives. When factors other than information strongly deter people from key practices, then the focus should be different. Just to mention some examples. Although stigma has been found to deter people from getting timely diagnosis for tuberculosis, con-
ventional activities continue to give information about symptoms and treatment as if that should prompt people to action. When parents decide to take their daughters out of school for a variety of reasons (e.g. they undervalue the worth of girls’ education, girls are afraid of sexual violence on the way to school and at school), communication should be expected to do more than just tell people ‘send your girl to school’. When women who receive micro-credits become the target of violence by relatives and partners (who seek to extract money), it is absurd to expect that messages promoting the availability of loans will turn loan programmes into viable opportunities.

These cases suggest that many development challenges go deeper than lack of knowledge or misinformation. Only if problems and solutions are properly assessed can the potential contributions of communication be better defined.

Likewise, when communication programmes are endowed with the task of changing attitudes and social norms, the challenges are complex. Those challenges raise a host of ethical issues regarding the role of communication in cultural change (e.g. Who decides? What values should be supported? How to reconcile ideals crystallized in the MDGs with local beliefs?).

Leaving the ethical implications of communication interventions aside (a topic that deserves a separate discussion in its own right), my own interest is in calling attention to the insufficiencies of conventional information approaches to tackling deep-seated social norms and cultural beliefs. Typical messages that trumpet the virtues of alternative beliefs and practices are hardly sufficient to spearhead change. Facilitating change in patterns of sexual violence and childbirth practices, decisions about the size of families and child-feeding behaviours, or the assignation of insecticide-treated nets and financial resources for healthcare among household members, is not mainly a matter of strategic messaging. Underlying such practices are complex power dynamics, gender roles, and religious beliefs. Only a good understanding of how social norms persist and change in specific communities can provide guidelines for communication approaches that are adequate.

Programs to eliminate female genital mutilation (FGM) provide valuable examples to illustrate the kind of contributions that communication can make. ‘Get people talking’ about the issue through appropriate channels (from community meetings to radio programmes) is indispensable to raising awareness, assessing the situation and causes, recognizing points of resistance, engaging leaders, motivating disempowered voices, and discussing courses of action.

This process not only helps to nurture a sense of local ownership, which is crucial for global initiatives to gain long-term ‘traction’, but it also offers an opportunity for communities to discuss sensitive cultural issues and dynamics underpinning FGM: sexual initiation and ‘rites of passage’, perceptions about the role of young girls, norms about marriage, and networks of family dependency.

Likewise, the recent experience of polio campaigns also illustrate that the contributions of communication go well beyond information messaging. Only when political leaders in northern Nigeria decided to halt the campaigns because of doubts and rumours about vaccine safety and the intention of the eradication programme, or families in some states in Northern India actively resisted and avoided immunization teams, did global polio partners realize that a different kind of communication intervention was needed. Announcing vaccination dates and places through appropriate local media was insufficient. It failed to address existing concerns and widespread mistrust about top-down programmes. What was needed was to engage communities in dialogue about immunization, address perceived needs, negotiate the staffing of vaccination teams, and the like.

Conclusion
That the field of communication has a role to play in global efforts to achieve the MDGs seems beyond doubt. Development institutions with diverse mandates (health, poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, environmental protection) typically count on some kind of communication expertise. That expertise is often expected simply to perform informational duties such as produce press releases and design
media campaigns. No question, such interventions are often necessary and can be effective in disseminating basic information to help people make better informed decisions.

However, addressing some of the most difficult development issues requires a different approach. Health experts typically do not conclude that mothers prefer to give birth at home because they lack information about clinics, or that malaria kills thousands daily because communities are not aware that mosquitoes kill. Education specialists frequently attribute dropout rates to factors other than families ignoring the potential benefits of education.

From appalling infrastructural deficiencies to the persistent inability of states to deliver services and control runaway violence, a host of issues account for some formidable obstacles on the road to the MDGs by 2015. Rarely do diagnoses demonstrate that information gaps are major contributors to abysmal health and educational conditions. However, communication is still expected to deliver information messages. Consequently, interventions and messages are frequently understood as opportunities to express development wishes (‘get your child vaccinated’, ‘stop sexual violence’, ‘get tested for HIV’) rather than opportunities to engage communities in the identification of problems and solutions. Moving from reality to ideal conditions and behaviours requires more than announcing the desirability of the MDGs.

Sustainable development requires interventions that resonate with people’s concerns, survival strategies, perceived risks, information needs, and cultural practices. Communication has much to contribute in this regard. To maximize its potential contributions, it is necessary to recognize the limitations of the ‘magic information bullet’ mentality as well as the analytical and programmatic richness of the field of communication. ■

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Gender and the Millennium Development Goals

United Nations Development Programme

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are an integrated set of eight goals and 18 time-bound targets for extending the benefits of globalization to the world’s poorest citizens. The goals aim to stimulate real progress by 2015 in tackling the most pressing issues facing developing countries – poverty, hunger, inadequate education, gender inequality, child and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation. UNDP helps countries formulate national development plans focused on the MDGs and chart national progress towards them through the MDG reporting process.

In most developing countries, gender inequality is a major obstacle to meeting the MDG targets. In fact, achieving the goals will be impossible without closing the gaps between women and men in terms of capacities, access to resources and opportunities, and vulnerability to violence and conflict.

Millennium Development Goal 3 is ‘to promote gender equality and empower women’. The goal has one target: ‘to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015’. Four indicators are used to measure progress towards the goal: the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; the ratio of literate women
to men in the 15-to-24-year-old age group; the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

The existence of a separate goal on gender equality is the result of decades of advocacy, research and coalition-building by the international women’s movement. Its very existence demonstrates that the global community has accepted the centrality of gender equality and women’s empowerment to the development paradigm – at least at the rhetorical level.

Yet the gap between rhetoric and reality persists: the 2005 primary and secondary school parity target will likely be missed. But even if it were achieved, it is hardly sufficient to ensure the full participation of women in the political and economic lives of their countries. Much more is needed: full reproductive health rights and access to services, guarantee of equal property rights and access to work, affirmative action to increase political representation, and an end to violence against women and girls.

To realize the MDGs, governments and their partners must seriously and systematically ‘engender’ efforts to achieve all the goals. But today, the gender focus is largely limited to the gender equality, maternal mortality, and HIV/AIDS goals – leaving out critical development issues such as the feminization of poverty, the preponderance of female-headed households among the hungry, and the lopsided impact of environmental degradation on women (particular in terms of time spent gathering fuel and hauling water).

Making MDG reporting gender-sensitive

Gender experts and advocates have suggested several concrete ways to make the MDG implementation and reporting process more gender-sensitive. Two complementary approaches include adding targets and indicators to Millennium Development Goal 3 (on gender equality and women’s empowerment), and disaggregating the targets and indicators for the other goals by gender. Both deserve UNDP support.

The UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality\(^1\) suggests that national governments add additional targets, beyond the education target, under the gender equality and women’s empowerment goal.

Recommended targets include:

- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health services through the primary health care system.
- Eliminate gender inequality in access to assets and employment.
- Achieve a 30% share of seats for women in national parliaments.
- Reduce by half the lifetime prevalence of violence against women.

The task force also suggests that national governments add additional indicators for tracking progress towards the gender goal. Their recommendations include:

- Completion rates (in addition to enrolment rates) for primary and secondary school.
- Economic indicators such as gender gaps in earnings, sex-disaggregated unemployment rates and occupational segregation by sex.
- Prevalence rates for domestic violence in the past year.

Another option is to add at least one gender-specific indicator not just to the gender goal, as suggested above, but also to the set of indicators for all the goals and targets. A recent UNDP review of National MDG Reports\(^2\) argues that adding more indicators for each and every target, ideal though it would be, is not feasible given country capacity and workload considerations as well as the availability of data. Instead, the report recommends providing sex-disaggregated data and qualitative information on gender issues across goals and targets, and gives suggestions on how to do so:

- Involve women’s groups and gender experts in consultations on all the goals.
- Support independent studies using rapid participatory methodologies to collect qualitative information on key gender dimensions of goals and targets.
- Share draft reports with independent gender experts for review.
- Support efforts to sensitize statisticians involved in collating and processing MDG tracking data to the gender dimensions of the mandatory indicators under each goal.
- Support the collection of sex-disaggregated data.
Provide training to country teams and others involved in the MDG reporting process.

Where to go for help
Gender Equality and the Millennium Developments Goals (http://www.mdgender.net/) is a website with resources and tools for addressing gender equality in all of the MDGs – from literature on gender equality as it relates to each goal, to tools for advocacy and action. UNDP best practices can be found in National Reports, a Look Through a Gender Lens, available at: http://www.undp.org/gender/docs/mdgs-gender-lens.pdf.

Notes
1. See the final reports of the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, Toward universal primary education: investments, incentives, and institutions and Taking action: achieving gender equality and empowering women at: http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/reports2.htm#02
2. National Reports, a Look Through a Gender Lens.

Time to call things by their name

Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron and Clemencia Rodriguez

In the good old times, during the 1970s, things were called by their name. Studies of journalism were called exactly that. Universities had departments of journalism, where new professionals were trained to work in radio, television, or print media. However the emergence and domination of fields closer to corporate interests such as advertising and marketing soon began to put pressure on academic departments of journalism. Suddenly, the old departments of journalism changed to departments of ‘communication studies’ or – in Latin America – ‘social communication studies.’

Soon, without much resistance, the term ‘communication’ was used as a synonym of ‘information.’ The merry use of the word ‘social’ for everything ranking from advertising to lobbying is also astonishing. Nevertheless, ‘communication’ as the field’s name was imposed worldwide thanks to globalisation.

At the same time international development organisations, such as FAO and UNICEF struggled to introduce communication as an important concept central to all discussions about social development issues. These organizations realised that the mass media were not the only option for programmes intending to improve participation and sustainability. FAO, UNICEF and other important players in the international development arena realised that keeping people informed (donors as well as ‘beneficiaries’)
was important, but that it was even more important to involve local communities in the development process.

These pioneer development agencies began to see the role of communication not just as keeping stakeholders informed, but as interventions designed to encourage communities to participate and to gain ownerships of programmes and projects, as one important mean to achieve sustainability.

Terms such as ‘programme communication,’ ‘development communication,’ or ‘development support communication’ circulated within the United Nations and bilateral agencies during the 1970s and 80s. The very first development communication roundtables were organised by FAO in Rome to discuss these terms’ meaning.1 The communication and development conceptual framework found its roots in pioneering work done both by academics and practitioners from various world regions.

Consensus was reached around the need for a new type of communicator – not just a journalist – but a communication professional with all the necessary know-how, competences, and commitment to work hand-in-hand with those engaged in development and social change processes. Consistent with the long-term and process approach to communication, FAO funded participatory communication projects in various regions of the world, mainly using video cameras as a tools for participatory social change.

The UN increasingly needed communicators rather than journalists. However, the gap between universities and the development world didn’t allow for the offer to meet this demand for a specific type of expert. In their stride for survival and growth, academic departments of communication increasingly devoted their resources to revamping journalism into more market-oriented studies, thus creating a scarcity of the type of communication professional needed by development and social change projects.

Only a handful of universities worldwide have maintained a commitment to communication for development and social change, hence training the type of professional needed to meet the development organisations’ demands.

Although programmes and projects increasingly need communicators with a strategic vision of development and social change, these organizations have no choice but to hire journalists or organizational communication professionals.

As a result, communication positions within development and social change projects are filled with people doing posters, newsletters, radio and video programmes, and public relations, neglecting important areas such as long-term participatory processes, and national, regional and local communication strategies for development and social change.

The much needed communicator
If a journalist or any other type of communication graduate cannot fill the job of communication for development and social change, what kind of professional profile is then needed? What makes a ‘communicator for social change’ that doesn’t always come with a journalist?

The main and substantive difference is the strategic vision of communication as a tool to facilitate social change. Journalists and other communication professionals are not trained to design, implement, and evaluate long-term processes of communication to generate social change. A journalist in charge of developing a communication intervention to combat HIV/AIDS in Botswana or Indonesia, will produce a laundry list of mass media and public relations products: radio and television jingles and spots, posters, billboards, T-shirts, bumper-stickers, songs, etc.

In other words, he/she will design a media strategy, the usual paraphernalia that, in the case of HIV/AIDS, has not provided real answers in more than twenty years. In this type of work, a communication for social change strategy understood as a set of planned interventions grounded on communication and social change theory and lessons learned from practice is absent.

Field experience is another important qualifying competence for a communicator for social change professional. People with a background of work with communities trying to improve their quality of life are usually better equipped to become communication for social change.

1 MediaDevelopment 3/2006
experts due to a wide range of experiences that often have little to do with their academic training. What actually makes the ‘new communicator for social change’ is this mixture of experience in the field, a special sensibility and empathy to work with communities, and knowledge of communication theories, methodologies, tools, and technologies.

Educators, anthropologists, agronomists often make good communicators for social change when they add communication for social change theory, research, and technological know-how to their field experience with communities. Journalists generally come in with competence and skills in communication technologies – although limited in most cases to the mass media – but they can also become new communicators for social change if exposed to an enriched and holistic understanding of communication, to the historical experience of development/social change as a field, and to the experience of community work.

In current academic graduate programs in communication for development or social change it is common to find students with an undergraduate degree in any of the above mentioned fields plus field experience working with NGOs, community organizations, social movements, or international development agencies. This type of graduate student, with expertise in a field different from communication and experience working with vulnerable communities have the potential to become excellent communicators for social change.

Communication for social change deals essentially with issues of power, culture, and change. Thus a very especial sensibility is needed on the part of communication experts to facilitate processes of change among communities in the global South. Social change must be possible within a process of horizontal and respectful cultural exchanges, hence the profile of a new communicator for social change should facilitate this type of interchange and dialogues.

In communication for social change the process is more important than the products. In journalism, organizational communication, broadcasting, and advertising, articles, video documentaries, or radio programs are the only legitimate achievements for a skilled professional. But in social change and development, communication processes with the people and within de communities are more important than the printed or audio-visual aid that may emerge from the project. It is in the process of communication and participation that social change happens.

The new communicator for development and social change understands technology as a tool among other tools. Technology may support communication processes, but the latter should not be totally dependent on it. A pencil is an astonishing piece of technology, but when the goal is empowerment, participation, and social change, the pencil needs to be articulated in a series of processes and dynamics of representation, narration, and dialogue – what Oscar Hemer, based on Paulo Freire’s theories, has called ‘naming the world.’

In their continuous evolution, communication technologies offer new challenges and opportunities for scholars and practitioners in the field of communication for development and social change; simultaneously, new information and communication needs emerge among communities engaged in processes of development and social change. The new communicator for social change needs to have the capacity to navigate from one medium to another, to choose between multiple communication tools and technologies and to adapt strategies to particular cultural and social situations and contexts.

His or her experience may range from helping to strengthen labour organizations, to devising participation strategies for development projects at the community level, facilitating networking among non-governmental organizations, and/or producing educational materials. This flexibility to use communication strategies, tools, and processes in different cultural contexts is key to the professional profile.

Certainly, new information and communication technologies have opened enormous possi-
bilities in terms of horizontal cultural exchanges that communities and individuals can develop across the world. The meaning of community may broaden to groups that have common interests though located in different cultures and geographies. Access is gradually being granted to, or taken by assault by, social groups and individuals that were previously marginalized from using information and communication technologies (ICTs).

However, let’s not mystify ‘new’ ICTs. The use of ‘old’ electronic media for social change has shown impressive results over several decades. Since the 1950s many associations, labour unions, community and citizens’ groups and NGOs have challenged the dominant radio and television networks with low power radio, local television, alternative press, murals, puppets, and many other communication initiatives addressed towards specific communities. Latin America has pioneered community radio, and today there are more than six thousand community radio stations in the region. While bigger and bigger trusts are concentrating the control of the most influential mass media in the world, alternative networks of information and communication are flourishing often supported by the use of the Internet.

Emerging new studies
The landscape of studies in communication and journalism over the world shows a very unbalanced situation: over 2,000 universities offer degrees in journalism and broadcasting (though called ‘social communication’, with a focus on the mass media, advertising, marketing, and organizational information.3 These programs produce approximately 50,000 new graduates every year worldwide. On the other hand, less than twenty universities train new communicators for social change with the profile described above: long term strategic vision, field experience, process rather than product oriented, able to deal with power and culture at the community level, and technology savvy.

It is no surprise that large development organisations continue hiring journalists, broadcasters, public relations specialists, or organizational communicators to do the work of communication for development and social change.

The invisibility of communication for social change processes is aggravated by the fact that many development organisations still understand ‘communication’ as public relations and institutional image building. Thus, it is not infrequent to find communicators for social change assigned tasks such as drafting press releases, organising press conferences, doing lobbying for high-level officials, linking with advertising agencies to organise campaigns, supervising massive production of posters, T-shirts, radio jingles, television spots, or providing press coverage for institutional activities.

Leadership circles in development and social change organizations rarely include communication professionals. Thus, within these decision-making circles, decisions are made, development and social change projects are designed, lines of work are implemented without a thorough understanding of the role(s) of communication in processes of social change.

Frequently, development and social change decision-makers understand communication as public relations for the development agency. Within this framework, communicators and journalists employed by development projects and initiatives do not participate in the decisions taken with respect to communication strategies, plans and activities.

Development and social change organizations – ranging from mainstream development and progressive social change initiatives, to social movements – rarely consider communication as something more than a public relations tool. Within most development and social change organizations, communication is understood as those activities (brochures, TV and radio programs, press releases) designed to inform different stakeholders about the organization’s interventions, advances, and accomplishments.

Thus, among development and social change experts it is rare to find communication for social change understood as those strategic information and communication interventions designed to facilitate participation, to involve communities in their own decision-making processes about how to shape their own future, and to enhance the level of ownership of develop-
opment and social change endeavours among vulnerable communities.

Communication budgets, posts, and initiatives are commonly low priority compared to interventions in the areas of production, health, or education. There is no awareness that all these areas are traversed by information and communication needs, if the goal is for communities to gain ownership over their own future.

Every development or social change project has a communication component – frequently assigned to a communication team or expert. If the communication team is formed by journalists, or other communicators without specific training in communication for social change, the communication component of the project often tends toward public relations and institutional image building. If, on the other hand, the communication team can count on professionals with the new communicator for social change profile outlined above, frequently these professionals find themselves wasting a great amount of resources and time trying to explain to their supervisors what communication for social change is.

It is common to find communication for social change teams trying to legitimize their time supporting local community media, developing local networks, strengthening local collective imaginaries, while their bosses insist on assigning them tasks such as designing the next organizational newsletter, or press conference.

It is then crucial to train communicators for social change with a leadership profile, someone who can be part of the strategy and planning teams in development and social change organisations, someone with enough know-how and abilities to participate in the decision-making processes where social change directions, interventions, and lines of work are defined.

In response to this need, a handful of uni-

Rural peasants in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra, Cuba, listen intently to local radio. Photo by José Meriño Cespedes, Cuba, commended in WACC’s Photo Competition 2006.
iversities have created or are in the process of creating programs of study at the level of Masters and/or PhD with an emphasis on communication for development and social change. The main reference in this group of academic institutions is the College of Development Communication at the University of The Philippines, in Los Baños. In the last 20 years this College has grown from a small department within the Faculty of Agriculture, to a full-blown college that offers an undergraduate programme, and masters and PhD degrees in Communication for Development.

The influence of the College of Development Communication in neighbouring countries of Asia has been enormous. There is no other academic institution in the world that offers the three levels of studies with a focus on communication for development.

Other universities offer masters degrees and specialisations in areas that range from Communication for Development, Communication for Social Change, Public Communication, or Development Communication. Most of these programs are located in Latin America & the Caribbean in universities such as Universidad de La Plata (Argentina), Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar (Bolivia), Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru (Peru), Universidad del Norte (Colombia), Universidad de las Americas in Puebla (Mexico) and University of West Indies (Jamaica).

In North America, two universities have similar departments: Ohio University at Athens (USA) and the University of Guelph (Canada). Several programmes have been created in Europe, at Malmo University (Sweden) and Universidad de Sevilla (Spain). We only know of one masters degree in Communication for Development in Africa, at the University of Zambia, one in India at the G.B. Pat University of Agriculture and Technology, in Pantnagar, and a masters program in Communication for Social Change at the University of Queensland in Australia.

Several communication professors working in universities that do not have specific programmes on communication for development or social change are struggling to open an academic space to at least discuss these issues and the need to include communication for social change as part of their academic foci.

The most recent of these graduate degrees, a masters program on communication with an emphasis in culture and social change was designed in 2004 at the Universidad del Norte in Barranquilla (Colombia). With plans to welcome its first class in the Fall of 2006, this program embodies several features characteristic of more contemporary approaches to communication for social change. The structure and curriculum of this Colombian masters program are traversed by three paradigmatic orientations: first, that social change and culture are inextricably intertwined, thus research and action in the field of social change require a thorough understanding of culture and how to intervene to transform a cultural fabric; second, that training and professionalization in communication and social change should include field components only accessible via work with communities; and third, that scholarship and action in the field of communication for social change should be founded on sound theory, research, and intervention design.

Also, the program at Universidad del Norte may well be the only one that intends to develop the area of communication for social change evaluation; that is, how do we know that communication interventions actually generate social change? Trying to answer this question, this program is cultivating an area of research around participatory evaluation methodologies, indicators, and quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collection.

A network of universities
The Communication for Social Change Consortium, an organisation created in 2003 with the goal of building 'local capacity of people living in poor and marginalized communities to use communication in order to improve their own lives,' has defined as one of its priorities to support academic institutions and their efforts to strengthen communication for social change (CfSC) as a field of studies.

Before it became an independent organisation, the Consortium was a programme at the Rockefeller Foundation, under the leadership of Denise Gray-Felder. As a programme, it was a
key player in facilitating dialogue around training in CfSC. Already in January of 2002, at its conference facilities in Bellagio (Italy), the foundation facilitated a seminar on ‘Competences for Communication in Development’, with the participation, of academics (such as Jan Servaes, Silvio Waisbord, Thomas Tufte, Rosa María Alfaro and Nabil Dajani), and decision-makers from development organisations (such as Elizabeth Fox from USAID, Caby Verzosa from the World Bank and Gloria Coe from the Pan American Health Organization). Through discussions about the necessary competences and know-how, the profile of the communicator for development and social change was further defined at this seminar.

In May 2002, not long after, the Foundation called for another seminar in Bellagio, to discuss the contents of what an ideal curriculum for a masters degree on Communication for Social Change would look like. Several presentations from various regions provided a landscape of what already exists and the contents of those programmes of study.

The sixteen participants at the second Bellagio seminar were selected among some of the most knowledgeable scholars and communications strategists in the world, and from different generations of academics, including: Everett Rogers (USA), Alfred Opobor (Nigeria), Will Parks (Australia), Juan Díaz Bordenave (Paraguay), Celeste Cadiz (The Philippines), John Downing (USA), Ruth Tomaselli (South Africa), Colin Fraser (UK), Daniel Prieto Castillo (Argentina), Chris Kamlongera (Zimbabwe), and also included some who had participated in the first seminar.

The mix of practitioners and academics provided, again, excellent results. The outline of a masters degree on Communication for Social Change emphasized the need to include three essential fields of study: a) communication theory (including cultural studies); b) social change (development theory, political science, human development, globalisation); and c) research (participatory, qualitative, and quantitative methodologies). The masters degree would have a duration of three semesters, and during the second semester the focus would be on issues of human rights, international cooperation, health, food security, conflict resolution, gender and the environment, among other areas. The third semester would be entirely devoted to developing a research project based on field experience in a community.

Since the time it emerged as an autonomous organization in 2003, the Consortium defined as one of its priorities the implementation of projects aiming to strengthen communication for social change as a field of study and practice. Among these projects are the report ‘Making Waves: Participatory Communication for Social Change;’ the Body of Knowledge which is available online; and the upcoming ‘Anthology: Communication for Social Change, Historic and Contemporary Readings’.

In September of 2005 the Consortium facilitated a seminar with twelve universities that have programmes on CfSC in Los Baños (The Philippines). Representatives from most academic programs on CfSC and Communication for Development met to discuss their specific programmes and curricula, and to share their experiences. Toward the end of the seminar, participants decided to create a network of universities ‘that would help to spread the principles of communication for social change and development, provide mutual support among existing programs, and legitimate the work of these programs in both academic and practitioner communities.’

**Immediate challenges**

One of the immediate challenges for those involved in communication for development and social change is to bridge the gap that still exists between development organisations and academic circles. A better understanding of communication as a process in development and social change needs to be instilled among those that make decisions in development projects. Among these challenges is the use of appropriate terminology; discourse analysis has taught us that the way we name reality shapes the questions we ask, how problems are defined, and what type of solutions become intelligible.

Better understanding of the differences between ‘information’ and ‘communication’,
between ‘communications’ and ‘communication’, between organizational communication and communication for social change, between ‘participation’ and ‘access’, between ‘process’ and ‘product’, can facilitate the type of dialogue needed to build a common understanding.

Notes
1. The development communication roundtable has grown to include not only the UN agencies but also other players such as NGOs and foundations.
3. We are aware that the United States presents a different scenario where communication departments include fields such as interpersonal and intercultural communication while journalism and broadcasting—and communication for development—are housed in mass communication departments. In this article, however, we focus more on the profile of all other communication academic circles, where interpersonal communication (including small-group, intercultural, health communication) is barely known.
4. More on this organisation at: http://www.communicationforsocialchange.org/

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Comunicación para el desarrollo en América Latina: ¿Aún tiene sentido?

María Elena Hermosilla

Escribir sobre comunicación para el desarrollo me obliga a repasar mis propias experiencias profesionales en comunicación rural, derechos de las mujeres, recepción activa de televisión o prevención del consumo de drogas, desde espacios institucionales muy diversos: ONGs chilenas y brasileras, Gobierno, organizaciones sociales. Me hace revisar bibliografía y constatar que los problemas están, una vez más, señalados por el encantamiento ante los avances tecnológicos.

Quienes han hecho el balance de esta práctica en América Latina, recuerdan que primero vino la radio, luego los audiovisuales y las televisiones educativas; le siguió el video y su capacidad de producir imágenes a bajo costo. Hoy, el debate se centra en la tecnología digital y sus aparentemente infinitas posibilidades: internet, medios digitales, las posibilidades interactivas de los info-centros, etc.

En los 60 y los 70 en la Región, cualquiera fuese la tecnología utilizada (a veces, muy precaria, como un boletín mimeografiado o papelógrafo) o el actor que iniciase la intervención (cooperación internacional, gobierno o sociedad civil), el objetivo de la comunicación para el desarrollo era educar (alfabetizar, informar sobre los temas más diversos, capacitar...
técnicamente, etc.) a ‘otros’, los sectores pobres que carecían de acceso al conocimiento o a la instrucción formal.

Cualquiera fuese la motivación (cambio social, solidaridad, beneficencia, programa gubernamental o religioso), un agente externo emitía mensajes para los pobres, los oprimidos, los sin educación, los marginados, los campesinos, los ‘poblaadores’, los trabajadores. Más adelante, la tarea se hizo más sofisticada; se pretendía cambiar la mentalidad de los sub-desarrollados por una más moderna, más propicia al desarrollo.

¿Qué desarrollo?
En octubre de 1970, poco después de la elección de Salvador Allende como Presidente de Chile, aterricé por primera vez en París, invitada a participar en un coloquio del gobierno francés sobre ‘Utilización de medios de comunicación en operaciones de desarrollo.’ Título por sí mismo sugerente: la comunicación concebida como ‘medios’ y el desarrollo como ‘operaciones’, es decir, programas o proyectos ‘desde afuera’. El primer día del encuentro entre los invitados ya fuimos formulando la pregunta inevitable: ‘¿de qué desarrollo nos están hablando?’

Incómoda pregunta para franceses que trabajaban como cooperantes agrícolas en ex colonias francófonas, como Senegal o Costa de Marfil, o en proyectos de modernización rural en regiones pobres de su país. Para franceses que, a dos años de haber estar a punto de descubrir ‘arena de playa bajo los adoquines de París’ y en momentos en que los líderes de mayo 68 aún eran juzgados, se movían con discreta cautela. Lo mismo ocurría con los participantes brasileros, cuyo país padecía una férrea dictadura.

Para mí, chilena de la Unidad Popular, la pregunta sobre el modelo de desarrollo tenía una y simple respuesta: cambio total de estructura, revolución. Con los años, el derrumbe de los regímenes socialistas, la transformación del mundo en aldea interconectada y unipolar, la emergencia de nuevos conflictos y reivindicaciones como los ambientales y de género, la instalación del neoliberalismo y la pauperización creciente de las grandes mayörías urbanas en la Región, pero sobre todo, la dolorosa experiencia del golpe militar, la dictadura de Pinochet y la compleja transición a la democracia, me han hecho, como a muchos y muchas, aprender a complejizar las preguntas y sus hipotéticas respuestas.

A percibir los matices, a valorar experiencias que no se pretendan totalizantes y a reconocer los aportes de grupos y sujetos, en el pensar y en el hacer. Sobre todo, a no dar ‘recetas’. Pero en ese momento, todo lo que pareciera ‘reformista’, me parecía irrelevante: nosotros estábamos cambiando el mundo y la historia.

Para cerrar la historia de París, en el coloquio, los latinoamericanos vimos y mostramos largas horas de films educativos y ‘diaspora-mas’, tan en boga en esa época; oímos decenas de programas de radio; visitamos programas de comunicación rural y casas de la cultura en barrios periféricos.

En esas experiencias había riqueza y algunas tendencias comunes, como la valoración de la modernidad como modo de vida deseable que se percibía en los mensajes, la intención de traspasar conocimientos prácticos o teóricos útiles a la gente y el entusiasmo por experimentar con las más nuevas tecnologías. En algunas, había también un respeto por las culturas de los destinatarios, una búsqueda creativa de lenguajes adecuados a las distintas realidades y el genuino propósito de estimular la participación de la gente en la comunicación y en la comunidad, sobre todo en los programas de radio.

Al no discutir temas de fondo, no se relevaron dos elementos en común de las experiencias de entonces. Por una parte, la ingenua convicción de los emisores que sus destinatarios eran ‘audiencia cautiva’; es decir, que recibían solo comunicación pro desarrollo sin ninguna referencia temática ni estética al sistema de medios predominante en cada país. Por otra, se trataban de mensajes ‘graves’, es decir, en general carecían de recursos de entretenimiento.

Mirando en retrospectiva, no cabe duda que el escenario de este tipo de comunicación en América Latina ha cambiado dramáticamente en las últimas décadas. También los paradigmas con los que ésta se conceptualiza, las tec-
nologías utilizadas y también los lenguajes.

Tomando el ejemplo de mi país, ‘la gente’, los marginados, los desposeídos, a quienes la comunicación pretendía contribuir a ‘desarrollar’, han cambiado sus condiciones de vida. La población rural se ha reducido de un 20 a un 13,4 % en diez años. El analfabetismo, aunque en teoría, prácticamente no existe; la educación obligatoria, ha crecido a 12 años como mínimo garantizado por ley. El promedio de escolaridad de cada chileno es de 9.2 años. El problema actual no es de acceso sino de calidad.

La TV cubre el 100 % del territorio nacional y para 15 millones de habitantes, hay 11 millones 400 mil celulares 7 3 millones de conexiones a internet. Los pobres viven en la periferia de las grandes ciudades y siguen siendo marginados, pero son pobres con TV y celular, por tanto, con acceso a la información. Han surgido nuevos problemas, como la contaminación ambiental, la violencia intrafamiliar, el SIDA, el consumo de drogas y la delincuencia. Y la ‘escandalosa’ brecha entre ricos y pobres, según declaración textual de los obispos de la Iglesia Católica, y el déficit de ciudadanía, siguen siendo dos graves carencias.

Sin querer ser pretenciosa, me pregunto ¿qué de toda aquella comunicación con vocación educativa es rescatable? ¿Hay un futuro para la comunicación para el desarrollo en América Latina?

¿De qué comunicación estamos hablando?
En los 70 ya la pregunta acerca de la comunicación era bastante compleja. En Chile, dos autores, Freire y Mattelart, dejaron ‘sin piso’ no solo a las nociones rudimentarias y tradicionales de comunicación que aprendíamos en las escuelas de periodismo, sino también a los programas gubernamentales y de ONGs que utilizaban la comunicación como extensión de la técnica y el conocimiento (en agricultura, salud, alfabetización, autoconstrucción, ‘desarrollo de la comunidad’).

Freire, lo hizo con su comunicación entendida como diálogo y la educación como una toma de conciencia de la realidad a través de la problematización del hombre en sus relaciones con el mundo y con los demás hombres. Por ejemplo, la extensión rural, por su carácter antidualógico, constituiría una invasión al espacio histórico-cultural de los individuos a los que se pretende educar.

Mattelart desde el pensamiento crítico marxista, desnudaba a los funcionalistas norteamericanos y sus teorías de la comunicación. Los contenidos de los medios masivos estaban impregnados de ideología dominante; las televisiones educativas de América Central (donde participó el mismísimo Wilbur Schram) y otros experiencias diffusivistas de utilización de medios en educación no podían escaparse de su sino ideológico.

Ambos autores tuvieron una enorme influencia intelectual y también práctica; muchas cosas que hicimos o dejamos de hacer llevan su impronta. El movimiento de comunicación popular en América Latina, con todo su desarrollo y los aportes teóricos y prácticos de grandes nombres como María Cristina Mata, Mario Kaplún y Alfredo Paiva llevan inscrito en su ADN el espíritu freiriano, su concepción de comunicación como proceso de humanización y la educación como práctica de la libertad.

En la Región, el movimiento de denuncia de la hegemonía ideológica del norte sobre el sur, la globalización y el poder de las transnacionales de la comunicación como herramienta de dominación cultural y la lucha por un nuevo orden de la comunicación, tienen la huella de Mattelart.

La noción tradicional de comunicación como ‘agitación y propaganda’ que esgrimían los partidos de izquierda en los 70, nos parecía también paradójicamente ‘difusivista’ y no resistía análisis a la luz de ambos autores, que no solo pensaron y escribieron en Chile, sino que participaron activamente en iniciativas de comunicación. También nos hacían cuestionar nuestras propias prácticas de comunicación popular y para el desarrollo.

Las décadas siguientes fueron fructíferas en avances en los estudios y el cambio de paradigmas de la comunicación. Con humildad, aprendimos de grandes nombres como Renato Ortiz, Néstor García Canclini, Rosa María Alfaro, Muniz Sodré y del mayor de todos, Jesús Martín Barbero. Volvimos la mirada a las culturas, a sus diversidades y mestizajes; a sus relaciones con la influencia de los medios, a los
sujetos y a los grupos. Fueron décadas en que creamos instituciones en la sociedad civil, escribimos, investigamos, pero mayormente tuvimos una intensa práctica comunicacional en el mundo popular.

Desde el punto de vista de la comunicación educativa, es imposible no reconocer la contribución de ALER, CIESPAL y Radio Netherlands en la reflexión y capacitación de muchos comunicadores latinoamericanos en estrategias educativas y participativas.

La comunicación para el desarrollo

El boliviano Luis Ramiro Beltrán dice que la comunicación para el desarrollo es ‘en esencia, la noción que los medios masivos tienen la capacidad de crear una atmósfera pública favorable al cambio, la que se considera indispensable para la modernización de sociedades tradicionales por medio del progreso tecnológico y el crecimiento económico’.

Hace un matiz, cuando la diferencia de la ‘comunicación de apoyo al desarrollo’, a la que considera una actividad planificada y organizada –sea o no masiva– como un instrumento clave para el logro de las metas prácticas de instituciones y proyectos específicos de instituciones que propician el desarrollo.

Define una tercera categoría, como ‘comunicación alternativa para el desarrollo democrático’, que entiende como expandir y equilibrar el acceso de la participación de la gente en el proceso de comunicación tanto a niveles masivos como a los de base. Agrega que el desarrollo debe asegurar además de beneficios materiales, ‘la justicia social, la libertad para todos y el gobierno de la mayoría’.

En otro artículo, profundiza el análisis de aquellas décadas y engloba bajo ese mismo ‘paraguas’ conceptual a la comunicación popular, alternativa, la horizontal y al Nuevo Orden Informativo Internacional. Es decir, a la gran mayoría de las prácticas comunicativas de los sectores progresistas en los 80 y los 90. En el caso chileno, sería poner en un mismo paquete experiencias tan diversas como los boletines populares poblacionales agrupados por la Red de Prensa Popular; a las revistas de oposición a la dictadura, como Apsi o Análisis, a las radios educativas de la Iglesia Católica y a los trabajos de ILET y CENECA.

A mediado de los 90, Rosa María Alfaro publicó en Lima, para celebrar los 10 años de la Asociación de Comunicadores Sociales Calandria, un libro que despeja dudas y desarma estereotipos, abre nuevos horizontes a la comunicación para el desarrollo y valora el aporte que pueden hacer los medios masivos. ‘Una comunicación para otro desarrollo’ conceptualiza la comunicación como relación, reconoce el valor educativo de la información para la vida de los sectores populares (lo que en las investigaciones de CENECA en Chile simultáneamente estábamos constando) y más aún, al reflexionar sobre el rol de la comunicación en el diálogo y articulación de actores en una sociedad compleja y diversa como la peruana, le atribuye gran importancia a la educación desde los medios masivos, señalando que es necesario intervenir en los éstos en una línea de desarrollo desde una perspectiva comunicativa.

Alfaro afirma que hay que relacionarse con la opinión pública que se forma como corriente de consenso y que la valoración que otorgan los medios a aquello que hacen público es un objetivo fundamental del desarrollo: ‘valoración de la propia palabra, especialmente de los sectores oprimidos, populares, mujeres, jóvenes, etnias y minorías’.

La comunicación para el desarrollo vendría siendo un aporte al ejercicio de fortalecimiento de la ciudadanía de los sujetos y grupos y una educación para la democracia, esa asignatura tan pendiente en la mayoría de los países de América Latina. Saber escuchar para poder hablar a otros; la tolerancia en la pluralidad; agudizar la capacidad de comprender a quienes son diferentes escuchando sus mensajes porque nos competen y pueden aportarnos a la vida y al desarrollo; expresar opinión desde los problemas vividos, testimonios de los actores de los procesos sociales. Son los aprendizajes que podemos realizar en la relación entre medios, mensajes y públicos.

Desde otro punto de vista, también en los 90, Valerio Fuenzalida, al preguntarse sobre la validez en la Región de las TV educativas o culturales en sentido restricto, y a partir del estudio de los significados educativos que con-
struyen los receptores de los mensajes televisivos que no tienen la intención de educar (‘aprendo aunque no enseñe’), propone otro tipo de comunicación para el desarrollo, más ligada a la mejora de la calidad de vida de las grandes mayorías que a la educación más estructurada. Y propone la utilización de géneros masivos y populares, como los magazines y las telenovelas. La piedra angular del modelo es poder crear los mecanismos de interacción entre las TV públicas y las necesidades educativas en sentido amplio de las audiencias.

Estos dos autores demuestran que en los 80 se abrieron nuevos y diferentes horizontes, a la práctica comunicativa con objetivos educativos, que no buscan complementar la educación escolar y que parten de las propias necesidades y sentidos que construye la gente en torno a los mensajes de los medios masivos. Aportes al fortalecimiento de la ciudadanía y a la mejoría de la calidad de vida de las grandes mayorías son demandas que explican por qué en el siglo XXI, y en plena Sociedad de la Información, a aún luchamos por democratizar los sistemas de medios en América Latina, que entendemos como ‘plazas públicas’ donde se construyen opiniones y consensos que nos permitan avanzar y de los cuales esperamos aportes de servicio público. Sin desmerecer la contribución que puedan hacer las nuevas tecnologías, lo cual es motivo de otra discusión.

Bibliografía


María Elena Hermosilla es periodista chilena, magíster en Comunicación, ex Presidenta de la WACC/AL, autora de libros y artículos sobre Comunicación y Género y Recepción Activa de TV. Ha sido Jefa de Comunicaciones del Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM); en la actualidad, a cargo de las comunicaciones de CONACE, prevención y tratamiento del consumo de drogas, Gobierno de Chile.
Toma This. América Latina: ¿exclusión o domesticación?

Aníbal Ford
edición Julieta G. Casini

Este trabajo es una edición del artículo publicado por el profesor Aníbal Ford, en *Resto del Mundo: Nuevas Mediaciones de las agendas críticas internacionales.* Aquí también rompenos la estructura tradicional del paper y sólo presentamos algunos ejemplos que inciden en la comunicación y el desarrollo. La propuesta es analizar algunas de las problemáticas que directa o indirectamente afectan o van a afectar a América Latina.

El aumento de las relaciones interculturales ha sido intenso en el último medio siglo. Entre las razones directas se encuentran: las migraciones documentadas e indocumentadas, muchas veces generadas por ese crecimiento brutal de la brecha entre riqueza y pobreza, por la represión política, la industria del turismo, el traslado de los centros de producción. Entre las razones indirectas, simbólicas o mediátizadas, el desarrollo de los medios y de la comunicación vía satelital.

Esto cubre un amplio campo de trabajo intercultural, tiene sus expresiones políticas -el multiculturalismo- y ha renovado las discusiones, muchas veces confusas, sobre el “derecho a la diferencia cultural”. Lo cierto es que no sólo hay culturas y lenguajes en crisis extrema, sino que muchas de las culturas existentes tienen, sobre todo ante la presión de la “cultura única” o de los efectos de las “culturas únicas” del G7, un lugar precario, amputado o tergiversado en el escenario internacional. Hay una situación real de “deprivación cultural” que absorbe lo que señalamos como “data deprivation”.

Pero esta situación tiene una doble interpretación. Si para algunos se trata de ausencia de dispositivos para comprender, respetar o entender la cultura del otro, o de las carencias en diversas culturas de los recursos para desarrollarse, para otros significa el camino que deben recorrer las “culturas otras”, el “resto del mundo”, para volverse semejantes a las culturas dominantes.

Por eso, la intención ante los ciudadanos “sub-standard” -por clase o por etnia- es aplicarles “prácticas correctivas” o programas de “educación compensatoria”. Una “discriminación positiva” como plantea Jenks que ejerce una evidente violencia simbólica sobre los grupos sociales que por no compartir la “mainstream culture” se ven ya no como culturalmente diferentes sino como culturalmente deficientes.

Esto, que ya hizo fracasar muchos planes de desarrollo o de “ayuda” en los ’60, implica un fuerte residuo del darwinismo social que, aunque haya tenido su versión más transparente durante la expansión imperialista de la segunda mitad del XIX, nunca dejó de estar presente en las visiones que los países centrales tienen de las culturas periféricas o de ese tercer y cuarto mundo que hoy se dispersa por todo el globo.

La estigmatización como sistema de control social global

La tendencia endiosadora de los mitos del new order tiene su contrapartida en la visión negativa de los países dependientes. En el congreso AIECS (Asociación Internacional de Estudios en Comunicación Social) de 2002 y haciendo referencia a la construcción que de América Latina se realiza desde los sectores globalmente hegemónicos, la antropóloga Rossana Reguillo afirmó que “si la estrategia metropolitana de la colonia fue la de infantilizar e inferiorizar a sus sometidos otros, en la llamada sociedad de la información, los dispositivos mediáticos de representación de la otredad latinoamericana
dotan a la idea de inferioridad de nuevas méto-

foras y tropos que sólo contribuyen a ensan-

char las asimetrías en el sistema de identidades

vigentes”.7

Reguillo analiza allí los dispositivos de

estigmatización que acompañan desde antiguo

la visión que los países centrales tienen de

América Latina (“lo exótico irracional”, la nat-

uralización de la idea de que los latinoameri-

canos son incapaces de realizar los valores de la
democracia moderna) pero ingresando nuevos

 tipos de representaciones elaborados por las

industrias culturales y los procesos del aumento

negativo de la “visibilidad de la diferencia” o la

idea de “contaminación” que fortalece la ima-
gen del peligro que constituyen para cada país,

los problemas que afectan al otro.

Estos dispositivos fueron fortalecidos tras el

atentado del 11 de septiembre de 2001. A par-
tir de ahí -dice Reguillo- “el otro-afuera es por-
tador de los gérmenes de la disolución, se con-
vierte en el complejo extremo, distorsionado,
de los miedos de una sociedad alcanzada por
sus propias contradicciones. Un miedo canaliza-
do en la figura del inmigrante, del disidente, del
outsider”.

“Los indígenas de la cultura letrada”

Por otro lado, hay que tener en cuenta los

errores y las mitificaciones en la lectura de las

otras culturas. Hay una doble crisis en “la reconfiguración del saber y del narrar en la cul-
tura contemporánea” analizado por Jesús

Martín Barbero8 que señala que “el desorde-
namiento de los saberes, y los cambios en el

narrar están produciendo un cambio en los

molde escolares de la sensibilidad, la reflexivi-
dad y la creatividad”. En esta crisis hay un con-

flicto con el libro y la escritura, típicos disposi-
tivos de la modernidad, que se hace particu-

larmente importante cuando se intenta reducir las

culturas de América Latina, imponerle modelos
de desarrollo y de educación.

Teniendo en cuenta la fuerte expansión de la
cultura visual en nuestro continente,9 Martín

Barbero señala que: “sólo un interesado malen-
tendido puede estar impidiéndonos reconocer
que sociedad multicultural significa en nuestros
países no sólo la existencia de la diversidad
eítnica, racial, o de género, sino también aquella

otra heterogeneidad que se configura entre los

indígenas de la cultura letrada y los de la cul-
tura oral, la audiovisual y la digital”. En esta

problemática actúa no sólo la crisis de la repre-

sentación sino la demanda de reconocimiento,
la necesidad de “ser reconocidos: hacerse visi-
ble socialmente en su diferencia”.

Este planteo ante lo que señalamos sobre la
cultural deprivation, sobre las diferencias info-

comunicacionales y sobre otros aspectos que

marcan la estigmatización, la mitificación, la

construcción de hegemonía, la simplificación, la

marginación o el exotismo, pone en escena la

necesidad de comprender nuestras culturas

como conjuntos complejos y en pugna entre sus

características históricas, su relación con la

modernidad, sus tradiciones, sus reelabora-

ciones culturales, así como su recepción creati-

va de los préstamos. Y esta complejidad que

generalmente es reducida o simplificada a pocas

variables, ingresa en las rupturas de los mecan-

ismos de domesticación o en los prejuicios que

conducen a la exclusión.

El marketing étnico o el packaging de la cultura

del otro

Lo que no hay que dejar de señalar es que en el

manejo que las culturas dominantes hacen de

las culturas subordinadas actúan diversos tipos
de estrategias y dispositivos. La “cultura del

otro”, que poco avanzó en su explicación

social, ética, antropológica a raíz de “una mod-

erndad que ha sido incapaz de incorporar la
diferencia”10 ha pasado a ser focalizada de

manera “compradora” por las estructuras del

mercado y del consumo.

En otro lugar hemos analizado la utilización

por la publicidad de la diferencia cultural, de

las desigualdades y aún de los problemas de la

critica agenda global, como impacto de marca

(el “síndrome Benetton”). En otras investiga-

ciones, como la de Mazziotti y Borda, se ha

desarrollado el análisis de la construcción
cercenada de lo latino en programas televisivos

del emporio cultural de Miami -proveedor de

insumos para toda América Latina-, como es el
caso del “Show de Cristina”.11 Aquí nos referi-
mos al desarrollo del marketing étnico o al

desarrollo en empresas multinacionales de

“divisiones multiculturales”.”12
La exploración de mercados étnicos en clave de consumo -como puede ser el de los hispanoparlantes en los Estados Unidos- está produciendo elaboraciones de las identidades que las limitan o cercenan (y que también explotan el exotismo en la relación con los mercados nacionales). Es decir de la negación se ha pasado a la integración pero en las vías gatopardistas que traza el consumo.

Y esto es importante por la carencia en los formadores de la opinión pública (y del imaginario social) o, en la ecología comunicacional, por la ausencia de políticas culturales que pongan en escena todos los aspectos (históricos, económicos, sociales, etc.) de la cultura del otro. Estos procesos de diversidad controlada son frecuentes y complejos, porque estos dispositivos de estereotipación a veces son contesados o refutados por la misma publicidad.

La estructura que soporta estos operativos publicitarios y las nuevas estrategias de marketing bajo el lema de Wind “think globally, act locally” es poderosa como el “Globally integrated communications” (GIMC), un sistema de gerencia promocional que coordina comunicaciones globales a través de varios países y diversas disciplinas. La complejidad del tema -ya que ninguna persona puede dirigir todos los aspectos de todos los issues, especialmente cuando la envergadura del control es global y “cross-cultural”- absorbe operadores de distintas culturas nacionales que incluso rotan por varios países, lo que aumenta “su sensibilidad global y el desarrollo y la difusión de la cultura organizacional de la agencia”.

Estos trabajos realizados fundamentalmente sobre los valores y la vida cotidiana que de alguna manera muestran cuando lo global es lo micro y lo “glocal”, la “coartada” tienen un poder potencial, como la de presentar la relación entre culturas o las características de las culturas dependientes fuera de los marcos que exigiría un derecho a la diferencia cultural constituido con justicia.

MA$$ CULTURE: entre la información organizada y las apuestas del World Economic Forum

Entonces cómo se van a articular la información, la comunicación y, por lo tanto, las culturas durante este siglo. Tanto a nivel de los países hegemónicos y los intentos de la globalización neoliberal como en relación con la desigualdad de los flujos, las brechas, las distorsiones, los silencios, las estigmatizaciones que circulan sobre los países dependientes por los canales globales de los dueños de la “convergencia”.

Uno de los ejes de esta problemática es la relación entre la información y una de sus zonas de mayor condensación: la noticia, teniendo en cuenta su larga persistencia y la forma en que se generó a mediados del siglo XIX, durante la urbanización, la revolución industrial y esa etapa de la modernidad.

Otro eje es la noticiabilidad: los requisitos que se “exige” a los acontecimientos para transformarse en noticias. Según diversos autores y manuales de estilo o de los dispositivos de producción diaria dichos requisitos son: novedad, peso en la evolución futura, importancia y gravedad, proximidad geográfica, magnitud por la cantidad de personas o lugares involucrados, jerarquía de los implicados, etc. También la relación compleja de esto con otros procesos constitutivos de la actividad periodística como son gatekeeping y agenda setting.

Fue gracias a estos mecanismos que permiten “construir el acontecimiento” que la crítica agenda de los “problemas globales”, ingresó en los medios y se instaló en la opinión pública a partir de los sucesos de Seattle, en 1999. Gracias a su valor como “acontecimiento” y “noticiabilidad” funcionaron como punto de partida para el surgimiento en los medios internacionales de una serie referida a las protestas de los movimientos contra la globalización: sus denuncias y reivindicaciones políticas, sociales, económicas y ecológicas, muchas veces producidas ante las reuniones cumbres del BM, el FMI o el G8.

Sin embargo, a pesar de la fuerza de “acontecimiento” que adquirieron estos hechos, su presencia ha perdido fuerza en la prensa internacional en buena medida desde el 11 de septiembre de 2001, y a causa de la censura y el control que se impuso en el término de 24 horas y que también se extendió hacia otros acontecimientos y procesos.
Lo que aquí interesa destacar es que, aunque persistan los conceptos de noticia, noticiabilidad, gatekeeping, establecimiento de agenda y de géneros periodísticos tradicionales, es evidente que estamos ante cambios importantes en las implicaciones de los mismos, tanto a raíz de las nuevas búsquedas en investigación y desarrollo como de las nuevas políticas económicas e informacionales pensadas globalmente.

Junto a esto, en paralelo y desde los mismos centros de pensamiento hegemónicos, se presenta la iniciativa de achicar la brecha infocomunicacional de un modo particular. La tendencia de las potencias de percibir a los países “menos desarrollados” tecnológicamente como mercados potenciales para su producción de ordenadores, redes de conexión a internet, TV satelital, telefonía celular y tecnología digital, fue uno de los motivadores de la creación de la “Digital Opportunity”, utopía de conectividad mundial presentada en julio del 2000 en la reunión cumbre del G8 en Okinawa por el Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force) integrada por las principales empresas multinacionales de telecomunicaciones, informática y tecnología.

Si bien, la “Oportunidad Digital” fue seriamente criticada tras la cumbre de Okinawa y en varias de las protestas de los grupos “antiglobalización”, el DOT Force continúa trabajando y ya no se encuentra sólo en la etapa de propuesta. En particular en el 2001 Cisco Systems y el PNUD conformaron una alianza estratégica para establecer Networking Academies en los países “menos desarrollados” en una iniciativa denominada “Least Developed Countries Initiative”. No es extraño que, siguiendo esta línea, el título del Informe del PNUD de ese año haya sido “Poner el adelanto tecnológico al servicio del desarrollo mundial” y el tema principal del Informe (que presentó el Indice de Desarrollo Tecnológico) haya sido la integración de los países más pobres en “La Era de las Redes”.

La pregunta sobre la reorganización de los sistemas de información y de representación debe ser incluida en el análisis de América Latina y en cómo, junto con la presión económica y social, se la somete a la exclusión, la desvalorización o a la domesticación. Estos son productos no sólo de los medios o de las industrias de lo simbólico sino también de los discursos y de los documentos de los sectores visibles del poder mundial (FMI, BM, WEF) o de algunos poderes no tan visibles. Esto puede explicar que la razón del abandono de la lectura de las secciones de los diarios no se debe al desinterés de los ciudadanos sino a la opacidad que éstos observan en la información sobre los poderes económicos y políticos en un mundo donde la mayor densidad de teléfonos está en algunas islas donde se toman las principales decisiones económicas mundiales.

Notas

1. Expresión de un cartel de Pepsico destinado al mercado hispano. En www.vistamediagroup.com/food.html
2. Ford, A: Resto Del Mundo. Nuevas mediaciones (...). Bs. As, Norma, 2005
3. Con el término “cultura única” nos referimos fundamentalmente a la cultura de la globalización neoliberal encabezada por los Estados Unidos y también, aunque a través de diferentes mediaciones, por los países del Consenso de Washington.


**Challenges for HIV/AIDS communication**

**Thomas Tufte**

The following two testimonials are from Grahamstown, a town of 120,000 inhabitants in Eastern Cape Province in South Africa, where in 2002 I did fieldwork among 14-19 year old youth from different socio-economic strata. The objective was to seek a deeper understanding of how a local community handles the HIV/AIDS pandemic in everyday life in order to use those insights to critically assess the relevance, quality and appropriateness of current HIV/AIDS communication.

Close by my house there is a little girl who is HIV positive. At her home it’s only her sister who knows about the young girl’s status. They are both scared that if they tell their parents, they will chase her away from home. Her sister told me, and asked if I could keep it a secret. In clinics people who are HIV positive are being treated badly. Even if you ask them to get you some water, they will shout at you for no reason. Even if you are still in bad condition to be discharged, they will tell you that you need to go home because there’s no place for you here. You can just go home and die there. If your family knows your status they won’t take you to the doctor or hospital, only when your situation has worsened will they take you to Temba Santa Hospital (TB Hospital) and say you had TB. Even at your funeral they will just say you died of TB. I think if we can learn to be more open about AIDS, we can defeat it’ (High School Girl A, Rhini Township, Grahamstown).

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‘HIV/ Aids is the killer in our days, especially of our youth. People of Rhini are just making fun of people who are living with HIV/AIDS. That is why we have funerals every weekend. It’s also one of the reasons why people who are HIV positive don’t come forward. They end up turning to alcohol and drugs. Even in hospitals once you are told by the doctor that you are HIV positive, they tell everyone, even before you tell your own family... People always think that if they tell their families about their status, they will not be accepted. There is a girl that I know who is HIV positive. The first person she told was her school principal. The principal told her teachers and the teachers told the students. No one wanted to be associated with this girl. They treated her so badly that she quit school... They talked to her as if she was not a human being’ (High School Girl B, Rhini Township, Grahamstown).

Considering the fact that donor agencies, governments, NGOs and CBOs are spending large and growing amounts of money on HIV/AIDS communication, the interest of this project was to view HIV/AIDS communication from the community perspective. How is HIV/AIDS handled in the communities? What are the key problems? Where and how do the campaigns emerge as useful input?

Stigma
Both of the two girls’ statements above point towards one of the key challenges with HIV/AIDS today: the problem of stigma. Stigma is, according to Collins English Dictionary, ‘a distinguishing mark of social disgrace’. Sadly, it is the myths and misunderstandings surrounding this mark of disgrace, it is the fear of meeting this mark and it is the denial of having this mark, HIV, which creates a very difficult situation to tackle. It results in the ill treatment at hospitals, in the silence or gossip in the community, and it leads to nobody really wanting to know their own HIV status. It’s a situation that is tightly locked, and where communication hopefully can have a stronger role to play as facilitator in opening up this situation in so many communities.

What comes strongly through from the Grahamstown data is that young people feel their identities are at risk. Young people are almost by definition the most energetic, the most optimistic, the invincible generation with their future ahead of them. But, as one young man wrote in his essay: ‘If you get HIV, your future gets stuck’ (M20). You become part of a real ‘no future’ generation. At least that’s the perception many youngsters have due to the lack of a cure.

This again results in states of denial and situations of stress where many young kids develop an attitude signalling ‘I don’t care!’ Some of them deny that they might be at risk, and most often then blame the spread of the virus on somebody else – some groups of ‘others’ – be it the opposite sex, be it marginal groups such as prostitutes, be it those in another neighbourhood or be it simply ‘others’. HIV/AIDS is, in that respect, dividing societies far more than it is promoting unity or any degree of collectivity required to face the actual problem.

Finally, HIV/AIDS is obviously a problem of poverty and unequal power relationships in society: a pandemic which blossoms in societies with gender inequity; a pandemic that travels with human trafficking or with migrant labour: and a pandemic that strikes hardest against those that cannot afford any form of treatment. It is a symptom of social and economic injustice and should be combated accordingly. It’s not just about changing individual behaviour, encouraging people to use condoms or abstaining from sex. That’s just treating the symptoms, and not dealing with the underlying causes.

Community challenges
From my Grahamstown fieldwork, a number of issues emerge as crucial community challenges which – to the best of my knowledge and understanding – are challenges that many local South African communities are facing and that may serve as communication challenges for future campaigns against HIV/AIDS. I shall illustrate them with excerpts from the essays young people wrote on HIV/AIDS in their community.

1. Stigma. It cuts across most of the other challenges – the fact of massive social condemnation and marginalization making disclosure of your status, or simply revealing your uncer-
tainty about possibly having the virus, one of the most difficult decisions in life. As this boy from the township says: ‘They always think if they maybe tell a friend, family member or girl/boyfriend, that they will get into an argument and get dumped. They think that their families will start to dislike them. Everything their families are doing, they won’t include them’ (NB6-M). And as this girl from the township reports: ‘People with this disease are always ill-treated and it undermines their ability to live. You’ll hear them saying “instead of living this kind of life, I’d rather die”. Most parents chase their children away from their homes because they have the disease’ (NB1-F).

2. Fear. Although most human beings are afraid of acquiring a serious illness, widespread stigma throughout Grahamstown reinforced a feeling of fear to a degree that led to strong denial on the one hand and to careless behaviour and ‘laissez-faire’ attitudes and blame of others on the other. In many reported cases, it also led to suicide. Thus, at the heart of the problem lies the need to tackle these profound feelings of fear.

3. Lack of social support systems. By this I refer to the social institutions present in any community – from hospitals, schools and churches to families, friends and neighbours. Gathered under the analytical concept of ‘institutional mediators’ the most common experience was a lack of social support encountered in these contexts. The two initial quotes tell the story of the hospitals, and from their school experience they spoke of the risk of being thrown out if you are HIV positive as well as the risk of abuse by teachers.

As for social networks in the community, lack of support was expressed all the time: ‘What I don’t like is when the community treats people who are living with HIV/AIDS badly. Instead of welcoming them to your house, you chase them away. Other families start to dislike you when you are HIV positive. Even if you were drinking water from a jug, people who are not positive won’t use it. People who are living with HIV/AIDS, we need to support them so that they won’t think about their status. I urge people not to make fun of people who are HIV positive.’ (M1-F)

4. Superficial use of communication initiatives. It was very striking how all the key messages from numerous campaigns came through in essays, everyday talk and in interviews, but on a slogan-like level in deep contrast to the deep-felt problems of stigma, fear and lack of social support systems.

On the one hand the slogans illustrate the fact that the campaigns are reaching the target groups, are being listened to and watched and even discussed in the community. The big problem arises when you start contrasting this apparent success with the other findings mentioned above. There seem to be parallel discourses – one of handling information in everyday circumstances, the other revealing deep levels of ontological insecurity, fear and uncertainty.

5. Lack of joint community efforts. Seen from the perspective of 14-19 year olds, living in a community with a 10+ prevalence rate, with personal experiences of loss, illness and a stigmatized environment, what is needed is a coordinated community-based effort to tackle some of these challenges. This points to weaknesses in the health and education systems and the need for improvement. It also points to the need for a more articulate civil society. In my field experience, civil society did not come through with any noteworthy visibility or strength. Furthermore, there is the huge political challenge of replicating the current national process of seeking multisectoral and coordinated responses – and doing a better job of it – at the community level.

Media campaign
Finally, the findings bring this article back to its starting point of wishing to contribute to a critical assessment how mass mediated HIV/AIDS messages manage to communicate successfully with their target groups. I have highlighted some of the challenges, but let me end by providing an example of a media campaign which – albeit lacking a community connection – is working successfully on some of the challenges outlined above. It is a TV series called ‘Tsha-Thsa’, produced by an NGO called Cadre.

In 2003 and 2005 Cadre broadcast 26 episodes on Fridays in prime time. They
achieved high ratings among their prime target group of young people. The reason I highlight it here is that it successfully takes story-telling a good step further in quality and in framing the issues in nuanced and empowering ways. The story is set around four young people living in a small town far from the urban centres of South Africa. Most of them are involved in a ballroom dance activity that takes place in a local bar. The story is about them and in various ways and manners recounts how they cope with HIV/AIDS in everyday life.

Although the campaign is not rooted in any strong partnership with community-based organisations – something which my Grahamstown findings show is extremely important – the strategy of Tsha-Tsha is nevertheless interesting because of its careful and nuanced work with narrative. It is based on a set of principles:

- **The first principle is to work on communicating lessons to the audiences rather than attempting to diffuse messages about how they ought to behave.** Regulating human behaviour is much used in a lot of HIV/AIDS communication, despite the fact that it is proven to be extremely difficult to achieve behaviour change in this manner.

- **The next principle is to facilitate audience identification with the emotional and intellectual world and minds of the characters.** The point here is to work much more with the characters and their complexities in order for the audiences to engage with them in more nuanced manners.

- **The third principle is, in close resonance with Freire’s principles, to name or show ideas, behaviours or social activities.** It’s Freire’s principle of ‘naming the world’ that is pursued. By following the characters in their process of ‘naming the world’, the audience is participating in the process of reasoning and consciousness-raising which the character goes through.

- **Change is recognized as a process,** which results in a no clear-cut perfect role-modelling, but in showing how human behaviour is far less linear than behaviour change models indicate and seek to show.

- **The principle of ‘limit situations’** is about showing the need that sometimes occurs to push the limits of a given situation or transform a given situation. It’s about change, but it’s about engaging with the new or slightly changed situations, such as when one of the protagonists learns she is HIV positive and learns to live with it.

- Finally, the sixth principle is about empowering youth to find a place in the world that they can call their own. It is about pushing at the edge of conventions as they are framed, and for youth they are often framed by parents or teachers. In the series, there is a deliberate focus on how youth explore rules, norms and expectations set by others.

‘Tsha-Tsha’ is, through its elaborate mission statement and through its successful edutainment-strategy, a fine example of an innovative communication practice. It does, of course, have some short-comings, example that the evaluation lacks depth and that the TV programme is not incorporated into a broader strategy with other mediators in the local society. The significant innovation is however the manner in which it represents the issues. There is far less marketing of correct behaviours and more invitation to the audience to engage with the problems, doubts and troubles of these young ballroom dancers.

The key challenge we face is to develop ways in which such fine examples of edutainment/education can connect with community-based structures and organisations – pursuing the aim that the futures of young kids in South Africa and elsewhere do not get stuck because of HIV/AIDS.

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AIDS is predominantly a disease of poor people in poor countries. 2005 UNAIDS reports point out 90% of new infections take place in developing countries. Two thirds of all people living with the virus and 77% of all women living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa. India has the second largest number of people infected with HIV after South Africa. The epidemic is growing fast in East and Central Asia as also in Eastern Europe.

The cause of AIDS is underdevelopment. The best prevention is development My argument is that the causes of AIDS risk behaviours are structural, social, economic and political in addition to individual, familial and cultural in origin. The communication component of a solution needs to address these complex root causes that are invariably relational and therefore involve relational situational analyses.

To illustrate, why a male rural migrant is unwilling to use a condom in spite of his multiple sexual partners is not merely a function of his preference for ‘skin-to-skin’ sex but his adolescent introduction into sex and the expectations he acquired in his past relationships with his mother, father, initiation peers, religious leaders, teachers, early partners, marital preconceptions and the like.

The article starts by explaining why AIDS is a disease of poor people in poor countries. It then explains why communication alone cannot be a lifeguard for AIDS or a panacea for any development problem as this policy error continues to be repeated at the highest levels. The next section briefly reviews researcher advice on AIDS communication in developing countries before ending with a recommendation that media selection and message design address the relational roots of risky practices over the lifecycle (peers, family, church, school, sub-cultural events, health centre, state) and their contextual manifestations over space (economic, political, cultural).

No work, no wages
The virus finds easy entry into the bloodstream through genital sores that are untreated for lack of money for antibiotics. The virus infects rural migrants who are forced to leave their homes in search of work for pay, moving from a construction site to a mine to a factory town. The virus infects sex workers, migrants from the village themselves who provide human contact to other migrants.

The virus infects wives who stay behind in the village with the children when the husband returns at festivals or harvest time. The virus passes from the infected mother to her infant who she cannot afford to not breast-feed. The virus infects unemployed youth who sell drugs and start injecting themselves because there is no work. Clearly the proximal cause of AIDS is a virus, but the real causes go to the lack of jobs, the lack of economic development and the lack of public health facilities.

Media as lifeguard
I have shown how physical migration enables HIV infection earlier. Appadurai considers migration and media are characteristics of our present ‘globalized’ times. Peter Piot, head of UNAIDS, has frequently pointed out that communication media have the power to save more lives than doctors. Can one be a solution for the problems caused by the other? Given the state’s inability to generate rural employment where people live, and the need for them to migrate to cities to make a living, how can words and images presented through communication media help address these adults and adolescents to be resocialized into new family, sex
and work contexts they have not been prepared for?

In the late 1950s, well intentioned US journalists and World War II propagandists convinced the young UNESCO and USAID that media could create a climate for social change and development in newly independent countries. The Development Decade of the 1960s resulted in very little development by any standard and provoked examination of why media had not performed better.

By the mid-1970s, this writer and many others presented common sense logic in academic tomes: states must make social structural changes and provide development opportunities; media are only providers of information about such redistribution of life chances, information must be tailored to the needs and preferences of particular users in terms of their education, gender, class, region, language and needs; the provision of comprehensible credible useful timely information needs to be followed up by peer group discussion to be internalized and considered for action; for behaviour change and action, information provision (e.g. on agriculture, health) needs accompanying inputs such as medicines, credit, fertilizer and water supply; media must be stimuli and sites for dialogue rather than tools of diffusion.

In summary: media campaigns must be preceded by state initiatives on changes in opportunities for action, provision of information about these changes needs to be integrated with provision of supplies and inputs to act on the information. Inspired by the large audiences that telenovelas attracted in Mexico in the 1980s, Population Communication International and Everett M Rogers focused on information provision, making it less preachy and more entertaining. Thirty years later, the mid-1970s academic consensus merits repetition as we continue to grasp for quick single solutions to complex multidimensional development problems.

The Communication Initiative web site and associated electronic newsletters funded by UN agencies, bilateral aid agencies and foundations presents case studies and news of the many uses of communication media. A large number of scholarly books have focused on how to harness media better, now in the service of AIDS. In January 2004, the UN Secretary General and the US Kaiser Family Foundation launched the Global Media AIDS Initiative to get profit-making corporate firms who now owned media since the 1980s state divestment to integrate AIDS messages across their commercial entertainment programming.

MTV took the lead, with state and private media corporations from Russia, South Africa, the UK India and Brazil as members of the Leadership Committee. The World Bank and UNAIDS have included the mass media in their collections of ‘best practices’. UNAIDS December 2005 report showcases three projects from South Africa: Soul City, Community Health Media Trust, and Takalani Sesame.

What does media research say?

Recommendations on how to improve media influence on AIDS comes from scholars in industrialized countries and scholar-practitioners from developing countries.

Leading the researchers from the North are Robert Hornik2 at the Annenberg School at the University of Pennsylvania, who has generated a systematic list of recommendations based on excellent action-research and experiments over forty years: they await the political will of governments to act on them. A younger group of researchers (e.g. Thomas Tufte of Denmark) continue to write about applications of media for development, emphasizing the neglect of advances in current communication theory from fields such as cultural theory, qualitative methods, and cultural globalization.

Epitomizing practitioner-action researchers from the South is Warren Parker, Director of the Center for AIDS, Development, Research and Evaluation (CADRE) that has pioneered with the production of Tsha Tsha, a dramatic TV series that features rural youth. It is followed up by a radio talk show to encourage peer group discussion. Writing in 2004, Parker pointed out the need to go beyond individual-focused risk prevention strategies to a range of public health approaches and contexts of risks. Risk reduction strategies focused on the individual need to bear in mind that there are differences in power that overwhelm individual
intent, e.g. one faithful partner is infected by the other unfaithful partner, a young person is coerced into sex by a culturally-determined superior who is older than her, food and shelter may be exchanged for sex. Risks come from multiple levels too: the school, the church, the police, and the justice system.

Consistent with recommendations since the 1970s, Parker also stresses the need to differentiate and fine-tune recommendations to the situations of social groups on the ground, e.g. media messages need to endorse the abstinence and fidelity-oriented practices of the many rather than broad-based entreaties to change risky behaviour that is characteristic of only a few groups. In mid-2006, protests have risen against the across-the-board standardized application of the ABC (abstain, be faithful, use condoms) strategy by US agencies where the A and B have got more attention than the C (see ‘The ABC Disaster’, Drum Beat, Issue 345 May 1, 2006).

**Continuing victim-blame in development communication**

Analysis of the errors of development and development communication in the 1960s pointed out victim-blame: the claim was that developing countries had not advanced because their citizens were apathetic irrational unscientific peasants without the motivation to achieve. Current media campaigns against AIDS target present-day victims of state inaction and the virus: unskilled villagers looking for work in the cities because there is none in villages.

Media can stimulate dialogue at the grassroots level about what information citizens need, when, and in what form, to educate their governments – this is quintessentially bottom-up communication. Communication media can also share knowledge of opportunities created by the state, to enable their utilization. This would constitute conscionable top-down development communication. But what honest role is there for communicators where there is no development? An advertiser does not start running a media campaign to encourage adoption of a service before it comes to market. When the product is available, the media campaign may become more intensive: repetition may increase. Similarly, one would expect a functioning state to create opportunities for development and then communicate knowledge about them.

UNDP’s *Human Development Report* for 2003 reported that the 1990s were a decade of despair for many countries. Over 50 countries were *poorer* in the early 21st century than they were in 1990. Twenty are from sub-Saharan Africa, 17 are from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, 6 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 6 from East Asia and the Pacific, and 5 from the Arab States. The after-effects of colonization persist, in addition to limited foreign aid and market access. UNDP stresses that wealthy nations can materially shape development in the poor world and that their efforts to do so should consist largely of providing resources to and trading opportunities for poor countries.

The Center for Global Development also points to the need for wealthy nations to lift the burdens that they place on poor countries (e.g. WTO’s intellectual property agreement) and provide them with enough space to craft their own economic policies. They pointedly ask: would China have been better off implementing a garden-variety World Bank structural adjustment programme in 1978 instead of its own brand of heterodox gradualism? They highlight the experiences of Eastern Asia (e.g. Vietnam), China and India in creating business opportunities for domestic investors, including the poor, through institutional innovations that are tailored to local political and institutional realities.

The 54 countries in the UNDP listing are for the most part featured in the 2005 and 2006 Failing States Index prepared by *Foreign Policy* magazine and the Fund for Peace. For the purposes of this index, a failing state is one in which the government does not have effective control of its territory, is not perceived as legitimate by a significant portion of its population, does not provide domestic security or basic public services, and lacks a monopoly on the use of force. A failing state may experience active violence or be simply vulnerable to violence. Nevertheless, basic governance has to be
an internal affair. The consequences of outside intervention are illustrated by the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Rather than targeting migrant workers in developing countries who leave their families in the village to make a living because of state inaction, communication planners need to also put the blame where it belongs: on post-colonial states that have not got their development policies and AIDS plans right even fifty years after independence.

Embedding AIDS communication in multiple relationships

Given the tragic circumstances that have led to the spread of AIDS in states that are failing their citizens, three suggestions follow on how to cautiously use media selection and content to design communication interventions as one complementary input.

(1) Focus on those most at risk: Since the sale of state-owned media to private entities and the commercialization of all media, irrespective of their ownership, AIDS campaign designers have to buy media time and space just like toothpaste advertisers in most countries. Toothpaste advertisers know the importance of frequent repetition and attention to different stages of message development (e.g. awareness, interest, evaluation details, trial, adoption, reminders); they build the costs of such media buying and elaborated attention into the price of the toothpaste. They also ‘sell’ the same product through different media, characters and sets to different markets, based on the needs and sub-culture of the focal group.

Given the reality of a range of risky AIDS behaviours (injecting drug use, blood transfusions, unprotected sex with multiple partners) practiced differentially by different income groups and discussed by them in different terms and tones of voice, AIDS campaign design has to be differentiated too. AIDS messages are clustered on cable TV and in elite magazines in some countries when their poor have access only to radio and over-the-air TV media messages.

Design of messages in participation with distinct economic and cultural social groups can address differences in how to communicate, just like ad agencies custom-design their commercial campaigns for different market segments. When budgets are tight, attention needs to go to groups with the most need. Billboards welcoming Kofi Annan to town courtesy of the state AIDS organization are unconscionable when there is no money to pay for billboards in the shanty towns where migrant workers live.

(2) Integrate AIDS communication interventions with the efforts of other agencies responsible for other aspects of AIDS prevention, treatment and support, e.g. testing, counselling, condom distribution. Communication is one intervention and complementary to those who deliver goods and services. Creating awareness of the protective power of condoms when they are not available in that part of town makes no sense. Scaling up of AIDS efforts to cover large groups at risk must conceptualize prevention in terms of job creation, public health, gender counselling and medical-technical interventions. Communication interventions cannot be a substitute for job creation in rural areas.

(3) The content of communication campaigns must aim at ‘resocialization’ since adolescent and adult socialization that supplied the skills for life in the village cannot suffice for life in city slums or mining towns far from the family. Rather than presenting use of sex workers, re-use of needles or sale of blood at unlicensed sanitary facilities as deviant, these behaviours must be grounded in situational comparisons with the old, i.e. why there was no need to use a condom for sex with his wife in the village as distinct from paying for sex in the slum.

Personal changes take place in the context of group relationships. Counsellors and media campaign designers need to compare the old and new situations in terms of group contexts such as the family, friends, teachers, religious leaders, public health venues and employment locations. Institutions of involuntary resocialization (e.g. prisons) frequently fail more than half their populations who return to prison. The point being emphasized is that risky behaviours are formed in and sustained in relationship with other individuals and groups over the lifecycle and also over social and political space.
Illustrations of the possibility of change must surely be rooted in the context of realistic illustrative analyses of these causal and sustaining situations. Why an unemployed migrant unskilled labourer in a shanty town has unprotected sex with a sex worker is a function of many causes that may need to be addressed systematically, contextually and vicariously in several episodes of dramatic radio and TV series.

This article has illustrated why AIDS has become a disease of poor people in poor countries. It has refuted the notion of communication as a lifeguard that relieves the pressure on governments to address the neglect of employment generation in rural areas and their poor public health infrastructures that are the primary causes of the disease. It focuses on the need to address causal and sustaining contexts of risky behaviours (multiple sex partners, selling blood, using unsterilised needles) for those at highest risk to improve effectiveness of media campaigns.

Notes

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The Copy/South Dossier

*Copy/South Research Group*

The vital issue of copyright in economic, political, social and cultural development cannot be overlooked in discussions about communication rights and social justice. The following extract from a newly released report explains why.

More than 70 years ago, the American legal scholar Felix Cohen pointed out how certain legal words and concepts had clouded our thinking about the reasons why we have particular laws and, in particular, what their social purposes were supposed to be. Such words as ‘property rights’ and ‘fair value’, had become what Cohen called magic ‘solving words’ which, when used to try to resolve social issues, often simply became ‘transcendental nonsense’.1

The word ‘copyright’ has taken on the same status today. As soon as they are evoked in conversation, the word and the concept ‘copyright’ suddenly become some kind of purported or logical explanation – in other words, magic ‘solving words’ – as to why certain things in the world cannot happen … and why other things do.

Why should nursing sisters and public health professionals in South Africa be required to pay royalty fees to publishers so that they can distribute printed materials to students and patients about how to avoid HIV/AIDS? In the face of this shocking pandemic, why should the circulation of such truly life-saving information be restricted? The answer: copyright laws dictate they must pay royalty charges to a collecting society and, in any event, without copyright, no one would have an incentive to write and produce such materials.

Or why cannot the tens of millions of visually impaired persons across the South – more...
than ten million in India alone – change the format of a book or magazine so that they, as well as sighted persons, can read it? The answer: taking such a step is called ‘reproducing the work’ in copyright legalese and this is ‘a right’ that only the copyright holder can exercise.

Or why is a country such as Mexico allowed to extend the term of copyright to the life of the author, plus 100 years … meaning a song written today by a 20 year old composer would still be an item of exclusive private property in the year 2166? The answer, reply copyright’s supporters, is that Article 7(6) of the Berne Convention of 1886, (now part of the TRIPS Agreement of 1994) sets no maximum on the term or duration of copyright and the Berne Convention is an international treaty that is basically ‘unamendable’ because all of its 160 odd signatory countries members must unanimously agree before any changes can be made.

We in the Copy/South group say these answers are simply ‘nonsense’, transcendentally and otherwise. And there is a great deal of other related nonsense that is being said today about copyright that needs to be examined, remembering at the same time that copyright is a ‘created’ legal category which is of rather recent historical lineage, involves the state establishing a limited monopoly ‘right’ usually owned by a large corporations (a fact seldom mentioned by so-called ‘free marketers’ who say they believe in keeping the state out of the marketplace) and was simply absent from most parts of the South, where more than three-quarters of the world’s population lives, until very recently … and still has foothold only in some urban areas and leading commercial sectors.

In other words, copyright is not something natural or universal like the sun coming up. On this point, we would be the first to admit that looking at a range of access and cultural issues in the South through the lens of copyright has its own limitations and believe that future research needs to be more inter-disciplinary.

On the economic front and the question of the supposed benefits of establishing ‘mature’ copyright regimes in the South, we are reminded of how the now ‘reformed’ American consultant John Perkins describes the job he did for several decades on behalf of US corporations in the South: formulate unattainable economic plans (or ‘visions’) and plot the way to a ‘glorious future’ for countries such as the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In his current best-selling book, Confessions of an Economic Hit Man, Perkins writes how he approached the planning of new utilities, such as new electrical generating plants:

‘I always kept in mind the true objectives: maximizing payouts to U.S. firms and making Saudi Arabia increasingly dependent on the United States. It did not take me long to realize how closely the two went together; almost all of the newly developed projects would require continual upgrading and servicing and they were so highly technical as to assure the companies that originally developed them would have to maintain and modernise them.’

Is copyright expansion any different than expanding electrical power stations? The determined effort by both the United States and the European Union to ensnare the global South into the web of international copyright relations is not, it cannot be said too often, an effort by them to either promote internal economic growth in the South or, for example, to build markets for the music of Indian musicians in Boston or Berlin… or certainly for anyone other than a few ‘stars’ working for multinational recording companies.

Challenges facing education

On the question of access to educational materials, which is also closely related to financial questions and is another focus of this dossier, we note that one of the eight Millennium Development Goals established at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 is to achieve universal primary school education for all girls and boys by the year 2015. It is hard to disagree with the recent speech delivered in Mozambique by the United Kingdom’s Chancellor Gordon Brown when he said that ‘it is one of the world’s greatest scandals that today … two-thirds of Africa’s chil-
Children never complete a primary education ... (and are) denied one of the most basic rights of all, the right to an education.3

Yet children and young people going to school at all levels, including university, require good reading and library materials. And they will also need to be both affordable and plentiful, which raises the copyright question. When newly-independent countries of the South asked in the 1960s that educational materials be exempted from copyright so that they could attain wider levels of primary education in their initial phase of nation building, it was the powerful British book publishing industry which was the most vocal – and ultimately successful – opponent of what was called ‘heresy’ at the time.

And what of the next decade in the South? Will work on this goal of universal primary education be an occasion for an added ‘feeding frenzy’ by publishers, international (including British) and domestic? One hesitates to believe that Gordon Brown, likely Britain’s next Prime Minister, will rein them in or ensure that education comes before corporate profits.

Ways of writing and producing school texts and educational materials outside copyright’s strictures deserve more analysis, including the spreading of best practice. The questionable pricing and distribution practices of European and North American publishers also require much more empirical study than we have been able to undertake here; as one publisher recently remarked, ‘intellectual property lies at the heart of the publishing industry’.

On the question of cultural production, a third focus of the dossier, many questions require further discussion. Still, we do believe we have made a start here in looking at a few of the critical issues. In most parts of the South, the notion of individual ‘stars’, of individual appropriation, and of copyrighting creative work was still an alien concept until very recently; in many places, it still is. Is this changing and how quickly? If only a mere handful of musicians and artists can make a living in the North from a system that is centred on copyright, can the mass of artists from the South expect to be treated any differently?

What are the pros and cons of Creative Commons’ licences; is the analysis contained in the dossier too critical? And although we are said to live in an increasingly globalised world, rich countries of the global North certainly need more exposure to Southern understandings. As commentator Martin Jacques wrote recently in a British newspaper:

‘... globalisation has brought with it a new kind of western hubris... (and the view) that western values and arrangements should be those of the world; that they are of universal application and merit. At the heart of globalisation is a new kind of intolerance in the west towards other cultures, traditions and values, less brutal than in the era of colonialism, but more comprehensive and totalitarian.’5

Let the discussion and debate continue ... and move to a new level. Do not hesitate to contact the Copy/South Research Group by e-mail at contact@kopysouth.org with your thoughts, criticisms and ideas.

The Copy/South Dossier: Issues in the economics, politics, and ideology of copyright in the global South edited by Alan Story, Colin Darch and Debora Halbert, (May 2006) is available to download at http://www.copysouth.org
It is also available in a print version ISBN 978-0-9553140-1-8.

Notes
4. Martin Jacques, ‘We are globalised, but have no real intimacy with the rest of the world’, The Guardian, London 17 April 2006.
Communication rights and wrongs

Nalaka Gunawardene

In 2005 soon after the Asian tsunami left a trail of destruction around the Indian Ocean rim, a second wave hit – as local and foreign journalists arrived to begin intense and incessant coverage of the unfolding humanitarian crisis. In a few dreadful hours, the tsunami killed, injured or otherwise shattered the lives of millions. The ‘media tsunami’ that followed turned the plight of affected people into a global information circus. The rights to privacy and dignity of thousands of people were repeatedly violated.

The visual media, in particular, had no qualms about showing the dead, injured and orphaned. Of course, the rest of the world had a right to know - and media coverage helped inspire the fastest and largest ever donation of disaster aid. But did that justify victims’ most vulnerable moments being beamed around the world at light speed? I’m not so sure.

My concern with communication rights in the information society is this: exactly whose rights are we talking about, and what violations or denials are we agitating against?

Understandably, the mainstream media defend their right to free expression, and individual journalists have concerns about media ownership and the many pressures they face at work. Meanwhile, a new breed of information activists - inspired by the proliferation of information and communication technologies - are preoccupied with lofty issues such as intellectual property, Internet governance, privacy and equal access.

These issues are all important and must indeed be addressed. But if the information society is to include everyone, we need to move beyond these interests that are near and dear to us, the vocal minority.

In our self-righteous analysis, we in the media and in activist circles often fail to see the bigger picture. We also overlook the ‘communication wrongs’ that we ourselves commit, even if only inadvertently.

The ICT and mass media landscapes are littered with examples. Photojournalists roam war zones and disaster scenes, usually in the developing world, looking for the next image they will use to tug at the world’s conscience. But how many seek the informed consent of their subjects, even when circumstances allow it?

Shahidul Alam, who heads Drik Picture Library in Bangladesh, recently expressed concern that photojournalists are increasingly manipulating reality to get ever more dramatic images. In that process, they compromise journalistic integrity and trample on communication rights.

Media gatekeepers in the North often dismiss the better-informed and equally competent Southern professionals - saying, insultingly, that ‘they don’t have the eye’! And for years, I have resisted the widespread practice of Northern broadcasters and filmmakers using the South’s top talent merely as ‘fixers’ and assistants.

Information needs of the poor

Guilty of these and other communication wrongs, the media are certainly not alone in stepping on others’ communication rights. When development agencies and ‘pro-poor’ activists presume - in their middle class arrogance - that the impoverished just need information about survival or sustenance, the latter’s communication rights are shattered.

The information needs - and wants - of the poor are as wide and varied as everybody else’s. Sarvodaya, Sri Lanka’s largest development organisation, once surveyed the information needs of poor people in rural and semi-urban areas. It was found they wanted information on health and nutrition, as well as
details of bank loans, foreign jobs and insurance policies. There was also considerable interest in world affairs, new books and movies, national politics, and questions being asked in parliament.

To ignore this diversity and assume that farmers only want to know about the weather and crop prices is grossly insulting. We must stop treating poor people as some kind of sub-human species with a simpler set of living needs and aspirations. The list of communication wrongs by the media and other groups is long and depressing.

The first step toward promoting communication rights is to stop these wrongs, whether they’re acts of omission or commission. Throwing funds and experts at problems - as governments, aid donors and UN agencies often do - won’t take us very far.

Soul-searching and self-correction.
Ensuring communication rights for all in the information society is not a mere slogan or campaign; it is an integral part of social justice, and a goal that is attainable with our current technologies and resources. The second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) risked being distracted by the human rights record of the host nation, Tunisia, or the question of who will eventually govern the Internet. The real issues are neither micro nor soft - they are macro and hard.

As the planet’s info-elite gathered in Tunis, they should have taken note of the trampling, abuse or outright denial of ordinary people’s communication rights on a daily basis. The media and development communities are currently part of the problem.

Information and communication technologies may have launched our world on a course towards becoming a ‘global village’. But we won’t become a true global family unless and until we engage fellow villagers in our conversation.


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Media challenges facing small Caribbean islands

Nancy Muturi

The following article briefly discusses the current situation of information and communication technologies and the challenges of adopting new media technologies in the Caribbean. It also offers some insights into the way forward post-WSIS citing examples from the region. The terms ‘new media’ and ‘communication technologies are used interchangeably throughout.

Development communication has steadily grown over the recent three decades as professionals from different fields and backgrounds recognize and continue to explore the critical role of communication in bringing about change at various levels – individual, community, society, national and international. Though the field has faced several challenges over time, to an extent that some have declared it a dead field, compared to others, the interests and collaborative contributions of researchers, scholars and practitioners have led to the dynamism necessary for the growth and development seen today.

The emergence of new media technologies, also referred to as information and communication technologies (ICTs), and recognition of their role in social, political and economic development in the 1970s, has enhanced media for development activities globally. From personal computers, internet with wireless connection and digital cameras to cable television, two-way call-in radio, mobile telephones and other digital devices, these have all contributed
to the changes in information dissemination, while making sharing and networking possible among individuals and organizations almost in every field of development.

Internet and call-in radio for example contributes to the Caribbean markets, promoting the Jamaican culture including Reggae and Dancehall music, sports, or other local programming globally. Mobile phones also facilitate people’s participation in Caribbean affairs through call-in radio from any part of the world. Getting where they are today, many Caribbean islands have needed the support of the local and international communities.

New Media in Caribbean development

New media technologies are now widely recognized and promoted as tools for development, certainly in the less developed countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. A key focus of the 2003 World Summit for Information Society (WSIS) for example was on the closure of digital divide enabling equal access and use of the technology globally.

Caribbean governments have responded positively to the WSIS call and recognition of ICTs in national development with recognizable contributions for connectivity. For instance, a $15 billion Jamaican dollar project granted to Fibralink Jamaica Limited and Trans-Caribbean Cable Company Limited (TCCCL) for the construction and operation of two submarine fibre optic networks, will link Jamaica to North America, and the rest of the world (Jamaica Information Service, 7 January 2005). The government has also widely supported new technologies through the Ministry of Commerce, Science and Technology initially with financial support of close to a US$17 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, granted for e-readiness.

With such government commitment and support, the Jamaican government sets the tone for the rest of the Caribbean. Success in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago can be seen through the 2001 creation of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology to lead ICT initiatives. These initiatives have supported local and multinational ICT agencies and has contributed to a steady increase in tele-density through the penetration of mobile phones across the islands and to the mushrooming of Internet Café’s across the islands. Internet connection at home is however still low in Trinidad compared to other islands due to high connectivity costs.

In Antigua and Barbuda, the government has committed to building a new economy based on degrees of information, knowledge handling and exchange. This is with the recognition that accessibility to ICTs and connectivity, specifically broadband connectivity, which is largely dependent on the development of an adequate infrastructure, is equal to economic opportunity and will determine the rate at which a knowledge-based economy will emerge.

With the goal of promoting Antigua as a Regional Centre of Information Communication Technology Excellence, the Ministry of Broadcasting, Information and Telecommunications launched in a two-day ICT FEST in September 2005, a programme to reduce the digital divide and to increase tele-density by beginning to provide ordinary citizens with access to ICTs at the community level.

Similarly the government supports the development of ICT policy and strategic plans for guiding the integration and adaptation of ICTs in many spheres including education, commerce, governance systems and law enforcement (East Caribbean news, Thursday, 12 May 2005).

The international community has had a fair share of contribution in ICT adoption Caribbean-wide. With the leadership of UNESCO, ICT adoption is demonstrated by the emergence and development of community media across the Caribbean islands. Radio, community radio and local television stations as well as community newspapers are widely established with UNESCO funding. For example, UNESCO supported the development of a regional online newspaper Eastern Caribbean News an online news channels to serve the small islands in the region (http://www.ecnet-news.com).

Other international communities in the region, with interests in communication for
development, have included the World Bank offering grants and loans for ICTs for e-readiness and e-business, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) focusing on gender and development issues, and the Commonwealth of Learning with interests in education and the agricultural sector. UNDP, UNIFEM, UNICEF, and the European Union have also contributed through support of communication programs including website development and maintenance for information dissemination.

Not all small Caribbean islands, however, have the same capacity and capability as indicated above. Political problems in Haiti and economic challenges in Guyana and in other small islands are examples of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) where support for ICT development and adoption is needed. In Guyana, the lack of capacity and proper infrastructure is a crucial challenge. The country struggles for a government-wide ICT policy and strategy where technology benefits all sectors but this requires an enabling environment and infrastructure to implement such a policy.

Challenges for the Caribbean
The use and application of media and communication technologies for development has attracted the interest of researchers and scholars who question their potential as well as challenges and effectiveness in addressing the development needs of the region. One of the visible challenges in ICTs for development is the lack of financial resources to adopt and maintain the technologies in several islands across the Caribbean.

Financial issues particularly in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) including the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was one of the issues left unresolved at the 2003 WSIS along with the thorny issue of Internet governance (Hambly Odame, 2005). Financial strains related to connectivity in the small islands are largely felt by NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that struggle to keep or update websites due to high costs of subscription and maintenance. The prohibitive costs for IT consultants to create and maintain a web site prevent many organizations from using the Internet for their communication efforts.

An example of such organizations is Women’s Media Watch Jamaica, an advocacy organization that monitors the media concerning violence against women and other media-related gender problems. With support financial support from CIDA’s, gender and development program that ended in 2005, the organization developed a website and offered internet access and IT training including PowerPoint presentations and desktop publishing as empowerment to its members. Though the organization still has few computers, they could not maintain a website but produces a monthly electronic newsletter sent out to members and other affiliates globally via email.

Related to connectivity is the cost of individual Internet access. The prohibitive costs of computers due to a government levy on technology imports as well as high internet monthly fees ranging from US$40 to $60 depending on connectivity time make it impossible for Internet access from home for the majority of Jamaicans.

This situation is made worse by the high cost of fixed-lines telephones that puts an additional strain on consumers. As such many Jamaican people rely on access at the workplace, school or public places like libraries, Internet cafés and more recently, post offices. Internet connection is also available via the mobile telephones along with some service packages but limited by the high costs.

Lack of diversity among service providers also poses a great challenge Caribbean-wide. In Jamaica for instance, Cable and Wireless a UK subsidiary, enjoys a monopoly in fixed-line services and until recently the Internet and mobile phones. The provider holds a significant stake in the Telecommunication Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT), thus enjoying similar monopoly in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and several other Caribbean islands.

The emergence of Digicel, a subsidiary of the Irish based Mossel Engineering Limited, recently broke that monopoly through an investment of US$630 million in mobile communication. Smaller telecommunication companies have also emerged to compete with the
two telephone provider giants. However, the lack of guiding ICT policies and regulations across the Caribbean hampers this competition but many islands are in the process, some struggling to develop them as in the case of Haiti.

From a user perspective, access and effective use of computers is dependent on resources, skills and comfort with the technology. Many computer users in Jamaica have very limited IT skills thus only utilizing the technology for basic functions including word processing, data processing and email (Francis-Brown, 2002). A gender-gap also exists in the access and use of communication technologies Caribbean-wide, which calls for gender sensitive and gender-inclusive policies.

In Jamaica, for instance, few women have unlimited access outside of their workplace. Added to the connectivity challenges mentioned above is the issue of crime and violence, particularly gender-based violence, that prevent many women from such access to Internet cafés or public facilities, some of which are not accessible through public transportation (Muturi, 2006).

Related to gender issues are cultural factors that determine access to media and communication technologies. In rural Africa for instance, many women had little access to the family radio, which was controlled by the man and the older boys. In the Caribbean, men are considered techno-savvy and therefore required to know more about the technology such as computers, television and to some extent radio, which makes many women take a back seat in regard to media and other communication technologies and skills.

This has contributed to gender imbalances in training reflected in the job market where more women hold less technical positions in media and communication and dominate the call centres, most of which have emerged due to outsourcing of the US and European companies.

The way forward post-WSIS

In spite of challenges faced by the Caribbean islands, the recognition of ICTs in Caribbean development has contributed to continued efforts to improve the situation while creating the proper environment for their application. Jamaica has demonstrated this effort in financial support and a recent development and launch of IT policies in various government Ministries. Though the initial grants are from external sources, the commitment of the government has ensured a budget within the ministry of commerce science and technology for maintenance of the technology.

Building up the local capacity in ICTs and the need for skilled human resources is now recognized as a critical sustainability issue in the development of the Caribbean with the goal of eliminating or reducing the number of expatriates. The Jamaican government has introduced IT training courses to build the capacity required for effective use of technology for e-readiness, e-commerce, e-government and other e-business, which is done collaboratively with the academic institutions. The Creative Production and Training Centre Limited (CPTC) for instance equips the Jamaican youth with skills in media production on various cultural and community development programs (see CPTC website for more information - http://www.creativetvjamaica.com).

At the tertiary level, the Caribbean Universities, Northern Caribbean University, University of Technology and the University of the West Indies (UWI) have established ICT training programmes across the Caribbean along with several other vocational centres and privately owned training programmes. Worth mentioning is the UWI’s Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) which focuses primarily on media and development in the Caribbean at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Participants in the Masters in Communication for Social and Behaviour Change are equipped with a laptop computer with wireless internet card for connectivity while the University provides hot spots at various locations on campus. This connectivity has enhanced access to information and online resources in this resource poor Caribbean Island where laptops are excellent networking tools with professionals and programs in the development field.
With this strategy, however, there is still the need to move forward in the use of the technology for development purposes, addressing real problems that affect people in their daily lives. HIV/AIDS, for example, has become a women’s problem in the Caribbean affecting more women on a daily basis than men. However, even though women form the majority of telephone consumers, the technology has not been used to disseminate education or prevention directly to them. Based on the success (or lack of it) other development programs could learn from the health model. Research is however required on the possible challenges and drawbacks in the use of this new medium in disseminating such sensitive information to the public.

To use the technology as mass media there is a need for the development of policies and regulatory measures. Most of the policies in the SIDS have been in draft form for several years, hampered by the lack of human and financial resources to acquire technical support to complete and implement them. As indicated in the case of Guyana, a lead agency is required to enforce the agreed standards and maintaining appropriate regulatory policies. Policy issues are facing several other islands that still struggle to develop and implement them across the Caribbean partly because of the requirement of government support and commitment.

Support for the development of such policies as indicated in the 2005 WSIS would be a welcome step for the Caribbean islands. Policies also need to address the social, cultural, economic and gender factors that hinder the access and effective use of new media for development purposes and as a step toward the closure of the digital divide within the islands.

Finally, a collaborative effort between governments, private sector and non-governmental work is necessary for the adoption of ICTs for development in the Caribbean. For small islands, such collaborative efforts would reduce reliance on the international funding agencies in the adoption and maintenance of ICTs by pooling their resources and through proper coordination.

It is probably possible for such collaboration to occur between the islands, most of which have very small populations and, therefore, inadequate human resources. The technology, however, if properly utilized could fill the human resources challenges in the Caribbean regions.

References


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Digital media and development in Southeast Asia

Judith Clarke

The news is partly good. The ITU’s 2006 statistics show the developing world catching up a little with the developed world in using communication technology. The poorer countries are using mobile phones more, buying more computers and getting onto the internet more.1 But that is not the whole story.

There is certainly some good news in Southeast Asia. As can be seen from the table on the following page, every country in the region has increased its number of mobile phones and internet connections, some by three or four times, though from a very small base. Literacy and education are medium to high in the region, even in developing countries. But there is bad news too. The digital media, including the internet, are increasingly in danger of domination by large organisations. Southeast Asia, unlike other regions, has generally avoided the control of transnational corporations, but instead governments are working hard to marginalise the voice of the individual. In parts of Southeast Asia, opportunities for individual access are being curbed even before they become widely available.

This is very much in keeping with the region’s history. Several countries have kept the press very close to government: in Malaysia newspapers are owned and run by affiliates of the parties in power; in Singapore they come under government-owned corporations; in Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar they are government-owned, government-controlled or censored. Some countries have a flourishing commercial newspaper industry – Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia – but even in these places the press has a fairly small circulation and is mainly addressed to the elite and urban dwellers.

In all the countries of the region except the Philippines the broadcast sector started under the government and remains largely that way today. The whole region has long ranked low in western press freedom ratings. The latest Reporters Without Borders 2005 list2 puts Cambodia highest, at number 90 out of 167 countries, with Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia in the low hundreds, while Freedom House’s 2005 rankings place Thailand and Indonesia the highest, but only as ‘partly free’, and the rest as ‘not free’.3 Both rankings put Singapore towards the bottom and Myanmar and Vietnam among the worst. The Philippines remains low because journalism is dangerous: 22 journalists were killed in the five years up to 2005.

Broadcasting: television

Television choice has broadened considerably since the advent of satellite TV, but early predictions that international broadcasting would arrive direct from the skies untouched by national governments proved wrong. Indeed, Indonesia was one of the first countries in the world to use satellite TV when the government sanctioned the launching of its Palapa satellites from the mid-1970s to bring national programming to its far-flung islands.

By the mid-1990s, satellites turned digital, and this allowed much better control of signals. International broadcasters were happy to do deals with local companies providing cable transmission or set-top boxes because that guaranteed an audience, and governments were able to pressure the big-name overseas broadcasters to tailor their content to local cultural and political sensitivities. Several countries of the region now have their own commercial satellites owned by interests close to governments and providing local-language programmes.

Malaysia and Indonesia can certainly boast
that satellite television has reached rural areas that previously had little contact with the outside world, but access today is less and less direct-to-home and more often paid-for, with local-language programming very carefully controlled. The BBC and the Australian ABC have both tamed their international broadcasts to the region: both are in essence commercial stations and stood to lose income from bans. Satellite and cable television concentrate today mainly on entertainment.

**Broadcasting: radio**

Radio also remains to a large extent in the hands of governments, though there are more exceptions than with television. The clandestine radio stations of the Cold War have disappeared, though there is a new entrant: the US-government’s Radio Free Asia, which has been broadcasting local news in local languages to areas dominated by communist or authoritarian regimes since the mid-1990s. In Burma it is one of several illegal stations that oppose the military rulers, the other most prominent station being the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), run by Burmese exiles with the aid of the Norwegian government.

In Cambodia, however, RFA broadcasts openly via Beehive FM 105, a Phnom Penh station that is critical of the government, and is very popular. Voice of America and Radio France International also use Beehive, along with a US-funded local human-rights channel. There is a regional element here: the latter station has been given help and training by Radio News Agency 68H of Jakarta, an independent broadcaster set up in 1998 which, with funding from international organisations and NGOs, supplies programming by satellite to more than 400 community stations in Indonesia.

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<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2,310</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>20.31</td>
<td>64.85</td>
<td>1.66/5.95</td>
<td>0.07/0.28</td>
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<td>3,480</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>60.61</td>
<td>83.92</td>
<td>3.12/13.48</td>
<td>2.01/6.52</td>
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<td>1,880</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>61.77</td>
<td>0.55/3.53</td>
<td>0.19/0.36</td>
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<td>9,720</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>74.67</td>
<td>85.92</td>
<td>30.9/57.12</td>
<td>26.56/38.62</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>38.40</td>
<td>86.94</td>
<td>0.04/0.17</td>
<td>0.02/0.12</td>
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<td>5.1</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>88.80</td>
<td>93.93</td>
<td>15.54/39.85</td>
<td>2.56/5.32</td>
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<td>Singapore</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>27,370</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>73.75 (1997)+</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>72.41/89.47</td>
<td>41.15/56.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>7,930</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>77.77 (2003)</td>
<td>91.95</td>
<td>12.33/44.18</td>
<td>5.77/11.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>70.75</td>
<td>87.94</td>
<td>1.54/6.01</td>
<td>1.24/7.12</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Because many sets of statistics do not include Brunei Darussalam and Timor-Leste (East Timor), apparently because of lack of data, these countries have not been included.

+This seems very low; the Singapore government gives a figure of 98% for both sexes for 2004.

Community radio became legal in Cambodia in 2002 after lobbying by media activists persuaded the government to include it in the broadcasting law passed that year. Thailand permitted community radio in 2000, since when 2,000 stations have appeared, many without the requisite licence. Two have been raided, ostensibly for not following broadcasting rules, but their operators claim it was because they were critical of the Thaksin Shinawatra government.

In Malaysia the Centre for Independent Journalism, which is funded by western NGOs and international organisations, set up Radiq Radio in 2001. The station, run by just two people, uploads programmes made by communities, NGOs and individuals and on its website as MP3 files for downloading by anyone with internet access. The Philippines is also developing community radio, but it is hardly a safe occupation: 17 of the 22 journalists killed in the last five years were broadcasters on local stations.

E-strategies and the internet
Singapore is the only country in the region in the top 20 of UNDP’s Technology Achievement Index. The country is also one of the most advanced in terms of government online, but that is hardly surprising. The reason western media watchdogs criticise it is its strong grip on all means of communication. The government is the controlling or complete owner of all media, including the three ISPs, and insists that this is best for Singapore.

During the May 2006 elections, canvassing and political discussion over the internet were banned in the 10 days before polling day, scotching opposition blogs and plans to podcast rallies. The government requires bloggers to register, denying anonymity and exposing them to the government’s main tool again critics, defamation suits. In 2005 two student bloggers were made to apologise to an official and a government body for critical remarks on their blogs, one of them under threat of legal action. Malaysia’s ‘Multimedia Super Corridor’, the spearhead of the government’s effort to make the country a regional leader in ICTs, has not provided the same level of control, largely because of real conflict within the government. When then-prime minister Mahathir Mohamad sacked his deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, in 1996, Anwar’s followers took to the cyberworld. The government did not want to spoil its technology policy by banning their sites and instead countered with technological means, including hacking. One major news site, Malaysiakini, remains very active despite efforts to curb its influence, and a handful of others carry a critical view of the government.

UNDP identifies Indonesia and the Philippines as ‘dynamic adopters’ of ICTs, a term which describes countries with high-technology industries and technology hubs but large populations, low development indicators and uneven distribution of technology. Thailand, though it has a somewhat higher penetration of ICTs, can also be included in this category. It is likely that the ITU figures for internet use in these countries is understated because internet cafés are popular and represent large numbers of users. An official report from Thailand put the number there at 5,690 in 2004.

Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, formerly communist countries and still at low levels of development, all have nascent broadband networks, though again many cyber cafés. However, these are perhaps much used by international aid workers and visitors. Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam are perhaps inhibited in their expansion mostly by lack of funds, though in the latter two cases also by government desire to keep control. In Cambodia, US aid was used to set up internet access points in most provincial capitals, though they are continuing as private operations.

The military government of Myanmar, the State Peace and Development Council, tightly controls the media through direct ownership and strict censorship. Access to the internet is allowed only via the Myanmar Wide Web, a kind of intranet. The local press reported that the number of internet users stood at 63,700 in late 2005, and that Public Access Centers (PACs) – government-registered internet cafés – had been set up in 12 townships, with plans to extend them to all 326 townships in Myanmar.
It is reported that many unregistered ones exist as well. Yet the internet also provides the space for the very active opposition media, based outside the country and accessible to the large exile communities. DVB has a website, and other major players are the US-funded Irrawaddy and Mizzima, supported from India, as well as several operating from the Thai border. These websites are, of course, off limits to those living in Myanmar.

**The challenges facing Southeast Asia**

The region encompasses both the two extremes and intervening levels of ICT advance, but provides clear illustration that the wide availability of advanced technology does not by itself confer the right to communicate on the average individual. Satellite television has reached many parts of Asia, even rural areas, but has been tamed by governments and business. Singapore and Malaysia have blazed a trail in commandeering the internet for government advantage, so that individuals who wish to use it for self-expression not only find opportunities limited, but risks high. Myanmar is learning from their example – as its ally China has done.

The middle-ranking countries are opening up both to the internet and community radio – though the conflict inherent in the expression of multiple opinions can lead, in the Philippines in particular, to real danger. Powerful interests do not want to give up the control they have over the means of communication. E-strategies cannot work to bring about the Information Society without accompanying freedoms. Also needed are protection and encouragement for both access to and provision of information on the part of individuals and non-governmental groups.

For the poorer countries the biggest problem remains cost: in many areas local people do not even have the money to use internet cafés. It is difficult to make a business out of technology in these places, and governments, where they are not interested in controlling the sector, do not have the funds to fill the gap. The ‘digital divide’, while it is narrowing a little, remains a real hurdle in Southeast Asia.

International aid has come to the rescue in some cases by funding radio equipment and internet access centres, as well as giving moral support. This is often rather sensitive, since the sources of the funds or the countries they come from or the ideologies they represent may be disliked by governments, and the functions they are providing may encourage the articulation of opposition opinions.

Intra-Asian support could avoid these problems, but where it is happening it is doing so with outside help. Controversial though it is, international aid represents a means to start projects that pave the way to opening up communication technologies to all.

**Notes**

5. Labelle, Richard. Ibid. p. 15.

Judith Clarke, a former editor and correspondent for *AsiaWeek* magazine, is an associate professor in the Department of Journalism at Hong Kong Baptist University and specialises in Asian and international news.
Cultural pluralism protects traditional knowledge

Nicole Aylwin and Rosemary J. Coombe

By an overwhelming vote in October 2005, UNESCO adopted the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (hereafter the Cultural Diversity Convention). The Cultural Diversity Convention is designed to recognize the importance of cultural diversity and its contribution to the well-being of humanity and its future improvements. Some of its listed objectives include, ‘to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expression’, ‘to create conditions for cultures to flourish and to freely interact in a mutually beneficial manner,’ and ‘to promote respect for the diversity of cultural expression and raise awareness of its value at the local, national and international level.’

The Cultural Diversity Convention suggests that cultural diversity is integrally linked to a number of other United Nations goals such as development, poverty reduction, and environmental sustainability (UNESCO: 2005). This new Convention authoritatively positions the concept of cultural diversity in the international policy making arena and articulates it as a value similar to biological diversity.

Like biological diversity, culture is viewed as if it were a scarce or limited resource in need of protection from further depletion. Nation states, it is feared, no longer have the ability to protect national or internal cultural differences under trade conditions where all goods and services are increasingly viewed as market-based commodities. To counter such trends, culture is represented as a national resource to be preserved, maintained, and protected (like biological diversity) for successful economies, development projects, and sustainable environmental management.

As prime bearers of ‘cultural distinction’ in the international imagination, indigenous peoples are often the target, objects, and, too occasionally, subjects of projects that seek to capitalize upon culture as a resource. From the marketing of handicrafts to the promotion of tourism, indigenous peoples and other ethnic minorities often provide the cultural content that nation states seize upon to promote these projects. This is not surprising. The Convention on Biological Diversity has already focused world attention on the importance of protecting, promoting, and maintaining traditional knowledge for the preservation of diversity among, between and within biological species. The World Bank now fosters ‘development with identity’ and promotes projects that build upon indigenous social capital.

The World Intellectual Property Organization has founded a division called the Inter-Governmental Committee on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore/Traditional Cultural Expressions (IGC) that has spent nearly a decade negotiating means to protect, compensate and provide benefits to holders of traditional knowledge and cultural expressions, many of whom identify as indigenous peoples. The World Health Organization has put increased emphasis upon the importance of traditional medicines in meeting human health needs. The newly forged U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples will ensure that indigenous peoples will ensure that indigenous peoples have a more permanent and legitimate voice in all of these international negotiations, although indigenous, environmental, and development NGOs are still needed to represent the interests of minorities and communities within states who are unprepared to
recognize them as indigenous peoples.

What role is the Cultural Diversity Convention likely to play in indigenous struggles to have traditional knowledge recognized, respected and compensated for and to protect traditional cultural expressions? Is it likely to help or hinder the political efforts of indigenous peoples with respect to the territorial rights they insist are integrally related to their so-called 'cultural and intellectual properties' or their desire to maintain and revitalize cultural identities marginalized by the modern state?

The common pool of culture
The well-intentioned Cultural Diversity Convention was appropriately negotiated in a fashion designed to avoid approaching culture as a museum of artefacts, expressions, and practices to be preserved in a frozen fashion or essentialized as the static possession of distinct peoples defined primarily by holding it. Moreover, it is clear that intercultural cooperation is valued alongside the maintenance of cultural distinction and objectives of cultural growth and transformation are revered as well as cultural protection.

Nonetheless, for a document that prizes cultural diversity, it is remarkably devoid of respect for cultural pluralism. Culture is envisioned more as a sum total of expressive goods available for development and exploitation than as forms of life or frameworks of meaning and identity in the lives of people and the social life of communities. This is consistent with an ever-more hegemonic economic reductionism wherein culture is valued for its utility under conditions of informational capitalism in which non-tangible informational goods are increasingly commodified through intellectual property laws.

Markets need culture as a source of new forms of difference that can be packaged, bought and sold and ways of life only to the extent that they can be represented as forms of social capital. What isn’t recognized here is the basis of cultural generation in practices of social life and the reproduction and transformation of social orders. Culture is divorced from the social contexts of its ongoing creation and diversity is disarticulated from social relations between and amongst communities.

Constructing cultural diversity as a non-renewable sum of expressive cultural resources, enables it to be managed as so much ‘cultural inventory’ (Albro, 2005). Reducing diversity to variety permits even cultural resources in the public domain to be quantified, measured, and categorized so that states can assess what is available to use, buy, trade or recirculate. The logic is one of maximizing production. The preamble of the Cultural Diversity Convention emphasizes ‘the vital role of cultural interaction and creativity, which nurture and renew cultural expressions and enhance the role played by those involved in the development of culture for the progress of society at large’ (UNESCO: 2005).

Cultural interaction and creativity are periphery processes that facilitate the production of new or revitalized cultural content for the inventories of public goods. The social relations and processes behind the production of diversity are depoliticised as ‘interaction,’ conveniently ignoring the unequal power relations, colonial history, and racial and ethnic conflicts that also fuel the production and destruction of cultural difference. Managing collections of cultural goods is far easier than managing the politics of cultural diversity as it actually manifests itself in the world.

The public domain and traditional knowledge
The Cultural Diversity Convention clearly places the power to determine who gets to make ‘withdrawals’ from the cultural resource bank with those who know how to properly ‘manage’ it in the market. Thus the role of intellectual property rights is given priority, because it enables culture to be characterized as an intangible informational good that needs to be ‘protected’ through proprietary means. This position is consistent with the economics of neoliberalism that seeks to sequester cultural distinction as a market resource to stimulate economic growth.

By imagining a need to sustain a disappearing resource and establishing cultural diversity as scarce, diversity, intellectual property rights can be harnessed to assign value to what would otherwise be ‘lost’ in another version of the
‘tragedy of the commons.’ More cultural expressions will be generated, we are led to believe, if the proper market incentives are provided. Eventually, or so the story goes, the intellectual property rights will expire and these cultural forms will then enter and enrich the public domain.

It would be impossible to list the number of scholars, activists, and policymakers who have disrupted the variations of this dominant narrative and exposed its limitations, misrepresentations, and ideological underpinnings. The obvious fact that fewer and fewer cultural expressions are in fact entering the public domain due to the ever-greater expansion and convergence of intellectual property protections and the ever-greater extension of their terms, does not seem to be at all appreciated here.

Using the private monopolies that intellectual property rights create to promote ‘the free flow of ideas’ has always been paradoxical; it is increasingly nonsensical. But if the granting of intellectual property rights to enrich the public domain has been increasingly undermined, the very concept and contents of the public domain are also under scrutiny.

The IGC has worked tirelessly (with the input of WIPO member states, a number of civil society organizations, holders of traditional knowledge, healer’s associations, guardians of traditional cultural expression and indigenous peoples’ representatives) to educate the global public on the limits of using both conventional intellectual property rights and the public domain as appropriate means to protect the world’s indigenous and minority peoples from the misappropriation of their traditional knowledge and cultural expressions (WIPO 2003, 2005; Ahmed, Aylwin and Coombe, forthcoming).

Their work illustrates that many forms of cultural diversity will require alternative means of protection if they are to be maintained and that these means will involve important recognitions of legal pluralism, respectful of diverse social structures and appreciative of alternative forms of place-based livelihoods.

Finding ways to protect what is internationally known as traditional knowledge or cultural heritage has been integral to the struggle for indigenous rights of self-determination. There is considerable concern that a significant amount of traditional knowledge and cultural expressions have been wrongfully appropriated and used indiscriminately outside of indigenous communities, on the basis that such material resides in the ‘public domain.’ For years the invisibility and/or relative powerlessness of indigenous peoples in both national and international law has encouraged, or at least condoned the free and irresponsible use of traditional knowledge and culture.

Intellectual property rights have done little if anything to restrict such appropriations. Often the appropriation of this cultural content has been claimed as a new work by the appropriator who is viewed as simply borrowing ideas or reworking expressions considered to be found in the public domain because of their origins in collective traditions rather than individual authorship.

For many indigenous communities the public domain is a foreign and an inappropriate category because others maintain that it ‘contains’ traditional cultural forms that were appropriated in violation of indigenous laws and customs and/or without their prior informed consent. In other words, this domain does not represent their sense of what is properly public, because the ‘cultural inventory’ was acquired illegitimately, to the detriment of their communities, their traditions, their spirituality and their capacities for economic improvement.

Legal scholars Anapum Chander and Madhavi Sunder (2004: 20) astutely comment that many of today’s critics of over-extensive intellectual property protections do so by entertaining what they call the ‘romance of the public domain,’ – an ideal that assumes equal access to the goods within it. This romance conveniently obscures inequalities, particularly those of indigenous groups, and their lack of ability to equally access, use and benefit from a commons constructed without consideration for their interests.

Ironically, WIPO, the UN organization responsible for the administration of intellectual property no less, has acknowledged this and the IGC has drafted strong statements of normative principle, policy objectives, and pro-
posed specific measures to deal with these problems of inequality with relation to cultural forms. UNESCO, the UN body responsible for culture, moreover, seems bound to an ethnocentric worldview in which relations to cultural forms can only be imagined as privately (or nationally) owned properties or publicly available resources.

Communities all over the world are struggling to halt and to reverse the loss of cultural knowledge that was sometimes a deliberate policy and other times an accidental by-product, first of colonial rule and then of state development projects. The struggle over the protection of traditional knowledge and heritage is a cultural rights struggle – not simply to recover expressive forms that may have economic value but to protect and maintain social relations, community identities, and ties to land and resources that sustain alternative life projects (Blaser, Fiet and McRae 2004; Brown, 2004; Coombe 2005b; Cowan et al. 2004, Niezen, 2003).

Protecting and strengthening traditional knowledge in order to sustain it for community purposes may mean limiting access to it, and finding new means to protect it from misappropriation, as the IGC has recognized (Ahmed, Aylwin and Coombe, forthcoming). The Cultural Diversity Convention views all cultural goods as potential resources for development but it doesn’t seem to allow for their use in forms of social and economic development that do not involve their commodification. The market reigns as the exclusive means of circulating and valuing cultural goods; a remarkably monocultural means of promoting cultural diversity and one that is arguably more likely to further hasten the decline of cultural difference than to promote its proliferation (Coombe, 2003).

The melting pot of cultural diversity
The promotion of a homogenized public domain regulated exclusively by intellectual property rights is coupled in the Cultural Diversity Convention with an implicit presumption that the primary differences to be preserved and ‘protected’ were those between nations and the nations to be privileged were nation states. Convention negotiations clearly indicate that many states and other stakeholder groups envisioned one of the major purposes of the Convention as providing a means of ‘protecting’ domestic cultural industries from the onslaught of foreign cultural products occasioned by free trade (Albro, 2005). This form of ‘protection’ may quite properly be considered as a form of trade protectionism and we would argue, only legitimate to the extent that other international rights norms are furthered thereby.

From a cultural rights perspective, the more significant forms of diversity are those more clearly linked to the cultural life of peoples, which may correspond with national jurisdictions but more often refers to minorities within the state. In either case, the most significant cultural goods associated with these forms of life are not usually adequately represented by industrial modes of dissemination. To what extent is this concept of protection likely to encourage the consolidation and promotion of inter-national forms of difference through artificial creations of unique national cultural identities? The Cultural Diversity Convention privileges the state as the bearer of cultural distinction, and further privileges its agency in constituting national difference. The dangers of censorship and the suppression of minority cultural voices should not be ignored.

There is evidence that intellectual property rights are already being used to this effect. ‘Place Branding’ or the marketing of specific locations based on their cultural uniqueness and authenticity, is one way in which intellectual property rights are being used to forge new national, regional, and municipal cultural identities (Coombe, 2005a; Coombe, Schnoor and Ahmed, 2005). Success in branding requires the presentation of differences between places as fixed and homogenous.

In this quest for markers of difference, nation-states have historically been apt to appropriate the visual markers of indigenous peoples resident in their countries as indicators of unique national cultural identities and to promote their cultural expressions abroad to encourage tourism, trade and investment. Forms of cultural difference that have collective
social, religious, and historical significance to communities are thereby decontextualized and arguably ‘frozen’ in a fashion that may reduce their availability or suitability for sustaining the cultural life of communities. In some cases, this would clearly be a violation of cultural rights.

The discourse of culture emphasizes the classification, quantification and the commodification of culture and makes it useful primarily as a resource for state development through its domestic cultural industries. For communities whose valuations of culture do not privilege the state or the market, the Cultural Diversity Convention offers little hope, and without recognition of their cultural rights and alternative forms of protection in place their cultural knowledge and expressions will be even more vulnerable to state and industry appropriation.

**Resisting the inventory of diversity**

The Cultural Diversity Convention’s statist and neoliberal proclivities pose obvious dangers. Where are there sources of international legitimation for resistance to this commodification and co-optation of cultural diversity for state and industrial ends? Although we cannot fully make the case here, a re-integration of intellectual property rights into the international human rights framework repositions this alleged property right as a cultural right amongst other cultural rights. It privileges culture not as an inventory of goods, nor as a set of established differences to be valued under the name of a scarce resource designated as diversity, but as a means for engaging in more productive forms of dialogue across and between communities, and more diverse forms of social exchange that properly question the singularity of a public domain while diversifying the forms of protection available for cultural practices and expressions to meet a more diverse set of human needs and aspirations (Coombe, 2003; Coombe, Schnoor and Ahmed, 2005).

Claims of cultural difference *from below* in new social movements are often made to insist upon valuable forms of distance and autonomy from market relations and from state-backed industrial agendas (Coombe, 2005b: 16). Cultural rights claims have also been used to secure territories and resources (Robbins and Stamatopoulou, 2004) for those who may maintain subsistence livelihoods in which ecosystems provide forms of sustenance and spiritual meaning. New forms of rural development may be cultivated by communities who creatively use intellectual property rights to sustain traditional practices of production and generate new forms of cultural pride in the process (Coombe, Schnoor and Ahmed, 2005). In short, there is good evidence that the deployment of culture as a resource need not be dominated by states nor subsumed by a neoliberal calculus.

The Cultural Diversity Convention clearly has a number of weaknesses. If, however, it serves to raise the profile of issues of cultural diversity at the international level it may provoke wider conversations that elicit a greater range of valuations. The desire to protect cultural diversity should not be derided, but embraced from a more inclusive human perspective that encompasses a wider scope of human aspiration and continues to address the distinctively meaningful ways in which peoples understand social inequalities and express desires for social justice. ■

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Coombe, Rosemary J. (2005b) ‘Protecting Traditional
Beyond patriotism: Escaping the prison of ideology

Michael Traber

Knowledge is more than information. It includes understanding and interpreting information as the basis for decisions that directly affect people’s welfare. True knowledge demands access to information about issues that impact on people’s lives and their ability to contribute to policy-making. Understanding the context in which knowledge moves – especially that of public communication – is vital to processes of social development, so that anything that diminishes genuine public communication must be challenged. The following article, prophetic in its time, discusses some of the obstacles to a clear vision of what needs to be done.

Patriotism permeates almost every aspect of the culture of public communication bequeathed by the 20th century. There is probably no other principle that defines mass media output and media reception as clearly as the feeling of loyalty towards one’s country, which we call patriotism. I say ‘probably’ because we lack empirical data about this relationship. Patriotism and the related concept of nationalism have hardly figured as variables in the assessment of news and media content.¹ What A. D. Smith said about nationalism is doubly true of patriotism:

‘One can only be amazed at the comparative lack of sociological interest and research in...
this field. Sociologists from Comte and Marx to Parson and Dahrendorf have neglected nationalism and even today it has not become a major locus of sociological interest’ (Smith, 1983: 2).

It is usually in wars, often caused by nationalist hubris, and in the reporting of wars, that the phenomena of nationalism and patriotism come to the attention of communication researchers. It is as though they were then picking up the pieces of these tragedies while soon forgetting about the roles which patriotism continues to play in the life of nation-states.

The following article first addresses the concept of a culture of public communication. The second part examines the relationship between the mass media and the state. Thirdly, it shows how the ideology of patriotism imprisons public communication.

The media have created their own culture
The mass media as we know them are not some curious gift from heaven. They are what they are by virtue of specific historical processes that have been guided by specific political and economic interests. The values they enshrine and the myths they project are purposeful and part of a media culture. One such myth is the media’s acclaimed objectivity. News objectivity, according to Dan Schiller, is ‘a cultural form with its own set of conventions’ (Schiller, 1981: 5), the purpose of which is ‘the cultural configuration that permits readers to indulge in their belief’ (ibid.: 6).

Johan Galtung (1986: 7) coined the term ‘social cosmology’, in which news and other media content are embedded. A cosmology is a doctrine and a map of the universe that tries to simplify the bewildering world we live in. A social cosmology is trying to do the same for the relationships we establish with peoples, nations and cultures on a global scale. Most importantly, the social cosmology of the mass media has a ‘centre’ and a ‘periphery’. It thus divides the world into spaces.

North America and Europe are the world’s centre, which contains the elite countries of the world, most notably the USA and a number of European countries like Britain, France, Germany and Russia. The periphery consists of places where very little happens, and when something is happening, it is usually negative. Lots of things go wrong in the centre as well, but these negative reports become part of many others which speak of positive achievements and developments.

The social cosmology that guides our culture of public communication also has an ideological dimension. It used to be clear-cut: communism versus capitalism. This was more than a conflict between East and West; its scope was global; the conflict was exported to the South. It is worth recalling at least one example from that time, lest we forget.

The British newspaper the Sunday Times (13 May 1984) carried an exclusive report on its front page headlined ‘Starving Babies’ Food sold for Soviet Arms’. Below the headline was a large photograph of a naked, crying, starving baby. The reporter, Simon Winchester, wrote:

‘There is mounting evidence that food sent from the West to drought-stricken northern Ethiopia is being diverted by the Ethiopian military regime to its army – and also – to an increasing extent, to the Soviet Union to help meet the regime’s huge arms bill.’

Winchester’s sources were an anonymous Ethiopian official who had fled to Britain and a number of English public figures whose criticism of the Ethiopian government of that time was well known. The report referred to an ‘emergency hearing’ in the European Parliament, ‘at which testimony of those who are convinced that aid is being diverted will be presented’. Yet no such hearing was planned for that time. And when Ethiopia was indeed discussed later on, an EC commissioner explicitly criticised the Sunday Times report.

No word about this appeared in the newspaper. The damage had been done. It was a successful attempt to fabricate a story which precisely fitted into the political cosmology and which, therefore, appeared credible: Soviet arms for Ethiopia, paid for by Western food aid, destined for babies. The story should remind us of the lies and deceptions which occurred almost daily in the media of East and
West, and beyond, as a result of an ideology which had become part of the culture of public communication. It’s a heritage that we have not completely expurgated. If evidence for that is needed, recall the reporting of the war in the Persian Gulf (cf Media Development, 1991).

Since the implosion of the system of state-controlled socialism in East and Central Europe and the disappearance of the Cold War, our culture of public communication is gradually changing, and this in two directions. The dominant ideology is now ‘the free market economy’, which basically means freedom for individual enterprise, and more freedom for financial speculators and transnational corporations.

The second direction is a new division of the world between the good and the bad, friends and enemies. Parts of the Arab world bear the brunt of this. Their leaders are demonised, regardless of what they are doing. But enemies are also created as a result of economic competition and rivalry. Japan’s markets must open to US imports, though Japan adheres to the agreements of the World Trade Organisation.

Among the many influences and constraints that affect our media culture, none is more penetrating and elusive than patriotism. But before this can be assessed properly the multiple linkages between mass media and the State need to be evaluated.

**Mass media and the State**

One of the great media myths of our time is the notion of the mass media as the ‘fourth estate’ viz. the ‘watchdog’ of government. ‘The romantic image of the “adversary press” ... is a myth: “functional” for certain purposes, but wholly inaccurate as a model of what newsmen actually do or can hope to achieve’ (Paul H. Weaver, quoted in Dennis and Merrill, 1991: 22).

Governments are the media’s most important social actors, and speak through the media as a matter of course. The assumption that the media are a guarantee against government secrecy and abuse of power, and thus assure freedom of information in the service of responsible government, is misplaced.

Timothy E. Cook goes so far as to say that the American news media are in effect governmental institutions. State and media exist in a symbiotic relationship within which the State provides information and the media decide whether or not to print or broadcast it. As Cook puts it: ‘The American news media need government officials to help them accomplish their job, and American politicians are now apparently finding the media more central to getting done what they want to get done’ (Cook, 1991: 18).

Frequently the media operate not only as a way of informing the public, but as a method of sharing information within the elite groups (see also Downing, 1986: 157-158). The government, in fact, relies on the media as a way of communicating within itself and with the elite establishment. The government also uses the media as part of its strategy to put its policies into effect. As Cook notes, the government can use the media to criticise another country over its policies and actions, or to place an issue on the agenda, usually an issue on which it is likely to perform better than any existing opposition groups and parties.

The media, on the other hand, rely on the government as a ‘credible’ source of information:

‘...journalists end up judging the utility of information at least as much by who says it than what it says. An “authoritative source” is an individual given a leading role in the narrative of that newsbeat. Someone in an official role within the government hierarchy tends to endow information with the credibility of his or her position within the hierarchy and/or with his or her involvement in the decision-making process; that same person outside that position saying the same thing would be more likely to be seen as providing speculation or hearsay’ (Cook, 1991: 16; see also Bennett, 1983).

Given that the media often (though not always) act as a glorified bulletin board for the State, those outside the State system, and those without power, are unable to make their voices heard – unless they become the helpless victims of disasters. Only those in public life (i.e. the politically or economically powerful, and the stars of entertainment and sport) have the right
to articulate their views and opinions (Scannell, 1989: 12).

Slavko Splichal argues that the State is indeed a mechanism of control over communication and information, but that, equally, information controls the State:

‘The power of the State is apparently counter-balanced, or reduced by the growing complexity of the social systems and their environment: more and more internal and external information is needed for the same relative level of control in/over society. In the developed part of the world, globalisation, which is largely based on informatisation, reduces (at least relatively) rather than expands the State power. At the same time the new information sector in society and the restructuring of the economy add new functions to the State. Thus the apparatus of government and its power to control expand due to the same process of informatisation’ (Splichal, 1991: 4)

Though the State does not exercise total control over information and media, it relies on them in order to function. The State and the media interact with each other – but in a manner that does not allow proper participation by the general public.

In the last ten or so years, a great distrust of State involvement in the media has arisen, as is demonstrated in the crises affecting the concept of public service broadcasting. Garnham argues that the idea of public service broadcasting is in crisis as a result of the loss of faith in the State as a credible actor in social life (Garnham, 1990; see also Rowland and Tracey, 1990).

Ethically speaking, the mass media are not responsible to the State but to the public. They cannot be seen in simple terms of either government mouthpiece or government adversary. They should, instead, be understood as an essential service to the public, ensuring the provision of information and debate that is a pre-condition of active citizenship or civil society.

The ideology of patriotism imprisons the media

No matter how critically one views the relationship between the media and the nation, or the media and the State, the fact remains that there is a universal human need for belonging. The essentially social nature of the human being needs a family, a community, a people, a nation. Not just belonging to a nation, but being co-responsible for the nation’s institutional political arrangements and structures that we call State, is one of the principal dogmas of modernity. ‘Everyone has the right to a nationality’ says Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and ‘no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.’

In his study of the history of nationalism, Ernest Gellner comes to the following conclusion:

‘Nationalism – the principle of homogenous cultural units as the foundations of political life, and of the obligatory cultural unity of rules and ruled – is indeed inscribed neither in the nature of things, nor in the hearts of men, nor in the pre-condition of social life in general, and the contention that it is so inscribed is a falsehood which nationalist doctrine has succeeded in presenting as self-evident. But nationalism as a phenomenon, not as a doctrine presented by nationalists, is inherent in a certain set of social conditions; and those conditions, it so happens, are the conditions of our time. To deny this is at least as great a mistake as to accept nationalism on its own terms’ (Gellner, 1983: 125).

What are those terms? The ‘principal fiction’ of modern nationalism is, according to Horsman and Marshall (1994: 45), that the nation-state presupposes ‘ethnic, racial, linguistic and cultural homogeneity... The borders always give the lie to this construct.’ If soil and blood express the darker side of nationalism, so does the demand for absolute loyalty towards the State, or the claim that any other social identity has to be submerged into the ultimately defining identity with the nation state. These claims, alas, have become part of the notion of patriotism.2

How patriotism affects public communica-
tion can best be demonstrated by an example. In 1975, David Astor, at that time editor of the British Sunday paper the Observer, wrote an article with the title ‘The Unutterable’. He described the attitude of the American news media towards the war in Vietnam at the height of the conflict. It was considered their patriotic duty to provide legitimisation for that war. Astor wrote:

‘The opponents of America’s catastrophic war were unable publicly to admit, while the war was still on, that all the American lives had been lost for nothing. With no Congressman or journalist willing to tell the American public this truth... it is not altogether surprising that Presidents and Secretaries of State hoped against hope that some less terrible ending would be found. Successive administrations failed to reach the right conclusion partly because there was no public awareness of the totality of the catastrophe to make it easier to utter the almost unutterable’ (Observer, 27 April 1975).

Silence can be a way of deceit, a method of falsifying reality, a refusal of what Vaclav Havel (1986) calls ‘living in truth’. If this is what patriotism requires of media workers, then patriotism is a major ethical problem for public communication.

In the case of another, more recent conflict, the US invasion of the Caribbean island of Grenada, Marlene Cuthbert reported that the press in each of six countries took an editorial stand which accurately reflected the attitude of their respective governments. As a result, press coverage of the invasion differed in Canada and European countries from US press coverage. Coverage in Caribbean countries depended more or less on whether a country had committed troops to the US-led invasion force. Cuthbert concluded:

‘In covering the crisis in Grenada, the media of each nation or region reacted from the perspective of the perceived interests of their own national system. The journalists of each media house had to find words to report the complexity of external reality. Despite the very different pictures painted in the various regions, although there were undoubtedly individual exceptions, it seems unlikely that the journalists were deliberately distorting or slanting news. But, however committed they are to truth, the journalists’ very selection of facts, and choice and organisation of words, necessarily involved interpretation, and interpretation introduced different perspectives which grew out of their ideological differences’ (Cuthbert, 1985: 33)

The Grenada invasion marks an interesting point in war reporting. For the first time in modern history the military took complete command of the news. This led to protests by the American media. They condemned the military’s news management but, in general, justified the war. The New York Times (4 November 1983) said:

‘Grenada was one invasion we can justify... It was the culmination of a three-year policy of confrontation that helped undermine the stability and civility of the (Grenada) government whose people we now rescue.’

When journalists actively endorse the patriotic line, they sometimes do so in defiance of public feeling. Dave Hill has observed how the Western press backed Allied action in the Persian Gulf with the claim that its ‘patriotism’ reflects that of the public – despite evidence of a more confused and diverse range of public opinion than the media acknowledge (Hill, 1991). The patriotic line of journalism also prevents journalists from presenting both sides of the story, and attempts to give the ‘enemy’s’ point of view are often met with the charge of recycling enemy propaganda.

Another feature connected with the patriotic imperative is the stereotyping of the ‘other’, and, in cases of conflicts, the stereotyping of the enemy or, to say the least, the legitimisation and reinforcement of existing stereotypes. This became particularly evident during the war in the Persian Gulf. Circumstances led themselves to such stereotyping, because the less we know about other cultures, races and faiths, the easier it is to project the image we wish or find
opportunite to use.

Stereotyping during the war in the Persian Gulf, and ever since, focused on one man. Saddam Hussein became the incarnation of all evil and anything could, therefore, be said about him without any substantial proof. His vilification also implied his ‘otherness’, as Arab and Muslim.

Stereotyping the enemy in the Gulf War extended to other Arab countries and their leaders when they did not side with the American alliance. The US media denounced them as virtual enemies. This was particularly the case with Jordan and the Palestinian leadership. If such stereotyping is deemed expedient or even necessary to uphold patriotism, then there is something basically wrong with this ideology.

The most amazing aspect about nationalism and patriotism is, however, not the deceptions, lies and stereotypes of the ‘other’ which are associated with them. What is truly astounding is the fact that most people are not even conscious of how patriotism manipulates the media. This is what I mean by the prison culture of public communication. By way of conclusion I would like to illustrate this with a parable.

**Conclusion**

Try to imagine yourself as an inmate in a prison. In fact you have been in prison all your life. You were born there and grew up there. You live there with many other prisoners. But neither they nor yourself really know why you are there.

You catch glimpses of the outside world, and you wonder what it is like out there. But the fact that you really don’t know does not worry you excessively. Because you consider the state of being a prisoner as normal, the prison your natural habitat. As prisoners, you don’t have newspapers or radio and television sets. But there is an intercom system in your prison. The governor tells you everything that’s going on outside. He should know; he is well informed.

Occasionally new prisoners join you, usually for a short time. They tell you the strangest tales of what is happening outside, stories which confuse you. You are glad when they leave. Then you appreciate all the more the reassuring voice of the prison governor over the intercom.

This worldview from prison is a metaphor of our news culture. We see and hear very little of what is really going on in the world, and what we see and hear are unconnected fragments of an often distorted reality.

Again, the real tragedy of this situation is that we consider it normal, that, like prisoners, we trust the media’s intercom system.

The prison is also a metaphor of the motherland, fatherland, la patrie, which claims our loyalty, whose ‘national interest’, always defined by the State rather than the people, should guide us in our actions as journalists and even as media researchers. We normally take this for granted. It is the world we live in.

Fortunately there are people and groups who from time to time are determined to break out of this prison; they start digging tunnels so that they can escape. And when they see the real world, they want to tell the real stories of all God’s people, unfettered by the codes and norms of nationalism and its ideological underpinning: patriotism.


Notes
2. An extreme manifestation of State power at times of socio-political unrest is the ‘national security state’, a term coined in Latin America in the 1970s. See Jose Comblin (1979), The Church and the National Security State, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

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Cultural uses of media technology by Inuit artists

Katarina Soukup

When the time came a few years ago to find an Inuktitut term for the word ‘Internet’, Nunavut’s former Official Languages Commissioner, Eva Aariak, chose ikiaqivik, or ‘travelling through layers’ (Minogue, 2005). The word comes from the concept describing what a shaman does when asked to find out about living or deceased relatives or where animals have disappeared to: travel across time and space to find answers.

According to the elders, shamans used to travel all over the world: to the bottom of the ocean, to the stratosphere, and even to the moon. In fact, the 1969 moon landing did not impress Inuit elders. They simply said, ‘We’ve already been there!’ (Minogue, 2005). The word is also an example of how Inuit are mapping traditional concepts, values, and metaphors to make sense of contemporary realities and technologies.

Like shamans in the digital age perhaps, Igloolik Isuma Productions (http://isuma.ca), the acclaimed Inuit media-art collective behind the award-winning feature film Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner (Kunuk, 2001; http://www.atanarjuat.com), employs cutting-edge technologies such as high-definition video and wireless broadband to ‘travel through the layers’ of time, geography, language, history, and culture. Isuma’s films, like the award-winning
Atanarjuat, the 13-part Nunavut (Our Land) television series (Igloolik Isuma Productions, 1994-1995), and the upcoming feature film The Journals of Knud Rasmussen (Kunuk & Cohn, 2006), allow us to see the living traditions of the past and demonstrate through their re-creation in film and video that Inuit are still able to practise them in the present.

Isuma’s films extend the ancient art of Inuit storytelling into the digital age through video art and filmmaking, appropriating these technologies to present to the world a discourse from a distinctly Inuit point of view and thereby combating the historical media image of the Inuk as Other. In this media report, I hope to illustrate how Isuma ‘travels across time’ through its films and videos and ‘travels across space’ through its work with the Internet.

**Travelling across time**

In the period of a few generations, communities of Inuit throughout the North have undergone a dramatic transition from lifestyles based predominantly on nomadic subsistence hunting and fishing to a sedentary, wage-based, consumer economy. Values, traditions, and skills that had in some cases existed for thousands of years were challenged and threatened by new conditions, living arrangements, and other stressors.

Starting early in the 20th century, missionaries both promoted widespread conversion to Christianity and concomitantly devalued and stigmatized traditional religion and healing practices. Shamans and their traditional practices were denigrated and suppressed. The few shamans that continued to practise did so in a way that did not draw the attention of governmental and Christian religious authorities. In many instances, the missionaries were eventually seen by the Inuit to be replacing the shamans, and Christian beliefs and practices became widespread.

As elsewhere among Aboriginal populations in North America, young people were mandated to go to school, often in residential settings far from their original communities. These institutions facilitated further loss of cultural traditions, both through their emphasis on the values and traditions of the dominant Southern culture and the active denigration of the traditions, languages, and beliefs of the Inuit culture. As the 20th century progressed, the presence of both the federal government and the military played a greater role in the lives of the Inuit. Communities were consolidated into large settlements with residential populations sometimes numbering in the thousands, and lifestyles changed significantly in many ways.

Although there is evidence of 4000 years of continuous habitation on the island (called Iglulik, ‘or place of houses’), the settled community known today as Igloolik was created only in the last fifty years, when federal government agents coerced Inuit living in small nomadic hunting camps in the region to settle in one location as a way of more easily administering them.

Arctic scholar Robin Gedalof writes how the Inuit are ‘time-travelers,’ and ‘...are probably the only people in history ever to have made the transition from the Stone Age to the Atomic Age in one generation. [They] ... have adjusted from an admittedly rich but primitive nomadic isolation to a life of satellite communication. They have grown up in a bone culture and have grown old driving tractor-trailers and typing out their memoirs for the benefit of millions of people ...’ (quoted in Columbo, 1997, p. 12). Indeed, Isuma’s upcoming feature film documents some of these dramatic changes.

The Journals of Knud Rasmussen is about the cultural encounter that occurred when the Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen and his Greenlandic companions passed through the Iglulik region in the 1920s during the Fifth Thule Expedition, a voyage by dog-team across the Arctic from Greenland to Alaska. Rasmussen’s goal was to collect material, spiritual, and intellectual elements of indigenous culture in order to prove that there was a common language and culture across the Arctic (Rasmussen, 1999). Rasmussen was unique among Arctic explorers in that his grandmother was an Inuk from Greenland, he was raised in both Denmark and Greenland, and more importantly, he spoke Inuktitut fluently.

In 1922, Rasmussen met the famous Iglulik shaman Avva and his family. He stayed with them for a period of time and collected the life
stories of Avva and his wife Orulu before leaving for another region. This moment in time would later prove to be a turning point for Inuit in Iglulik, unleashing many of the radical changes described above. Indeed, one year later Rasmussen returned to Iglulik and found that Avva had converted to Christianity.

While these changes are astonishing, Inuit culture and identity has nevertheless remained profoundly tied to the land. The Inuit of Igloolik, for instance, have been in regular contact with the South for over 40 years, and actively incorporate Southern technologies and consumer products into their everyday lives, all while renewing and re-inventing ‘appropriated uses’ that suit their needs. From this is born a contemporary aesthetic that is rarely understood or valued – since the outside world prefers the classic symbols of ancient/traditional Inuit culture associated with Otherness.

Igloolik, a remote community of 1200 people on an island in Canada’s Eastern Arctic, has a long, rich history of community media production for cultural purposes. In the 1970s, Isuma co-founder Paul Apak Angilirq participated in the Inukshuk Project, an experimental federal program that trained Inuit in basic television production skills. In 1975 and again in 1979, the community of Igloolik voted against accepting satellite television, preferring instead to wait until Inuktitut-language television programming became available, which it did with the establishment of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) in 1982.

Paul Apak Angilirq and Zacharias Kunuk worked for IBC for a number of years before deciding to leave that organization to pursue independent media production. Their chief complaints with IBC were that the management was based in Ottawa and that they never had the budgets to make drama that could visually illustrate oral history and storytelling by the elders. In the late 1980s, the pair met New York video artist Norman Cohn at an IBC...
training workshop in Iqaluit, and the three, along with Igloolik elder Paalosie Qulittallik, founded Igloolik Isuma Productions in 1990.

As Canada’s first Inuit independent production company, Isuma’s mission is to create a distinctive Inuit style of community-based filmmaking that preserves and enhances Inuit culture, creates needed employment, and offers a uniquely Inuit point of view to the global media audience. Since 1989 Isuma’s twenty-five films have won awards and critical acclaim in Canada and worldwide, including the Camera d’or at Cannes in 2001 for *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner*.

Isuma is known for its unique ‘docu-drama’ aesthetic, which brings forward the past and melds it into the present. In many of Isuma’s earlier videos (such as the *Nunavut [Our land]* series), actors were given only a general story arc and improvised the details. As Norman Cohn points out, Isuma’s docu-drama is ‘based on people living the dramatic experience … Inuit historical fiction is possible because the traditional history is so close in time to contemporary life, there are still people who can live their traditional history as actors. So that instead of having to act out, having to simulate the building of a stone-house, we actually build a stone-house’ (quoted in Wachowich, 1997a).

In more scripted projects, such as *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner* and *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, actors often inhabit their namesakes and ancestors, which Cohn describes this way: ‘Instead of taking an actor and putting him in a character, we take a character and put him in the actor’ (quoted in Wachowich, 1997a).

For his part, Zacharias Kunuk sees Isuma’s style of filmmaking as way of re-imagining an obliterated past:

> After the missionaries dropped their religion on us, storytelling and drum-dancing were almost banned. [Filmmaking] is one way to bring it back. And shamanism, I have never seen it. I have only heard about it. I can only imagine how it looks. One way of making it visible is to film it. Not because there is a Qallunaat [White] director telling you what to do. You just make it up. (quoted in Wachowich, 1997b).

Isuma’s films and videos are always based on oral history of the community elders. In the case of *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, the film’s storyline is based on the events recounted in Rasmussen’s writings, but as the film’s co-director Norman Cohn asserts, ‘Those events are interpreted through an Inuit point of view … Like looking at your reflection in the window and seeing through to the other side of the window pane’ (Norman Cohn, Secretary-Treasurer, Igloolik Isuma Productions, Montreal, personal communication, 31 October 2004).

Stephen Muecke, Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Technology in Sydney, has written a great deal about how the form of discourse shapes our understanding of Aboriginal history: ‘The main problem for Aboriginal History, as I see it, is to authenticate the appropriate discourse for its transmission. At the moment the ‘authentic’ accounts of Aboriginal history are firmly locked in academic standard English’ (1983). Isuma’s unique style of docu-drama counters this privileging of the written word penned by Europeans as the ‘authentic,’ ‘true’ historical record.

The films do this by appropriating communication tools to transmit an audiovisual form of Inuit oral history and storytelling to a hybrid audience: Isuma’s primary goal is to delight other Inuit, and its secondary goal is to connect with a global media audience. Indeed, Cohn argues that ‘[Inuit] storytelling as an oral form is most compatible in contemporary form with film-making or theatre’ (quoted in Wachowich, 1997a).

**Travelling across cultures and space**

For many years these media artists in Igloolik have dreamed of how to use the Internet in Igloolik to enhance and promote Inuit culture as well as their own creative process. While dial-up access has been available in Nunavut for several years, it has been a slow and unstable means of connecting to the Internet, with connection speeds usually in the 14.4 kbps range that most Southern Internet users last experienced a decade and a half ago.

Previous experiences using the Internet and the World Wide Web by artists in Igloolik
include the experimental ‘Live from the Tundra’ project (http://nunatinnit.org), produced by the Arnait Women’s Video Workshop of Igloolik in August 2001. A group of Inuit and non-Inuit artists took a two-hour boat trip from Igloolik to a traditional Inuit outpost camp called Najuktuktujuk, far from phone and power lines. The camp was presided over by elders Enuki and Vivi Kunuk (the parents of filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk). Over five days the group uploaded daily audio, video, photo, and text dispatches to the Web from what was dubbed the Nunatinnit Mobile Media Lab employing a high-speed data satellite phone (which at that time meant 64 kbps).

This daily journal of life in a remote outpost camp was meant to give the world a sense of the experience of living on the land in the High Arctic, as well as to push the aesthetic and technological possibilities offered by digital media and the World Wide Web – namely, hypertext, satellite technologies, streaming media, networked experiences, and mobile computing. Specifically, hypertext and integrated media permitted the expression of simultaneous, parallel, yet different experiences of the same event or moment in time (for instance, a seal hunt, sunset, walk on the land, performance, discussion, etcetera). Thus the same story or account of an experience may be told from different points of view (Inuit, Southern, elder, youth, male, female, etcetera) and though different media (sound, video, photo, drawing, text, etcetera).

While a successful experiment in remote, mobile computing, the satellite phone technology used for Live from the Tundra was exorbitantly expensive (airtime alone cost U.S.$10 per minute, never mind the cost of the phone terminal itself). It did, however, give Igloolik artists such as Zacharias Kunuk the desire to explore the possibility of one day establishing a permanent mobile media lab out on the land in a traditional camp outside the community of
Igloolik, streaming their media art to the rest of the world through the Internet (Soukup, 2001). The rollout of wireless broadband in every community throughout Nunavut in 2005, thanks to the efforts of the non-profit Nunavut Broadband Development Corporation (http://www.nunavut-broadband.ca), now makes cultural uses of the Internet far more interesting (and affordable). It may also be as, or even more, revolutionary to the economic and cultural thread of the Arctic than the launch of satellite communication across Northern Canada in the 1970s. Broadband can accommodate media-rich content, such as audio and video streaming, and thus a departure from text-based Web interaction, which is especially appropriate for a culture based on an oral language like Inuktitut (the language only came into written form less than 100 years ago with the introduction of the syllabic writing system introduced by Christian missionaries).

Beyond cultural uses, broadband also brings great potential for distance learning, e-commerce for Nunavut’s artists and craftspeople, and distance-medicine for a small population spread across a vast territory. Wireless capacity makes Internet accessible outside of the communities within a radius of 30 km, meaning that Inuit will be able to use this form of communication from their hunting camps if they wish.

Isuma’s goal is to find a way through wireless broadband for Inuit artists to return to a thoroughly contemporary nomadism that does not seek to throw Inuit back into the Stone Age, but instead marries tradition with the modern: remaining out on the land, living a traditional life of hunting and gathering, all while being in contact with the rest of the twenty-first century through the Internet. In Isuma’s case, this means making films and television outside of the confines of town, in the beauty of the Arctic landscape where the company’s films are shot, and having a remote media lab at Siuraajuk, the ancestral home of Zacharias Kunuk’s family.

This traditional hunting camp, about three hours by skidoo over the frozen sea ice, was most recently the location for Isuma’s new feature film, The Journals of Knud Rasmussen. For Zacharias Kunuk, who would consider himself a hunter before calling himself a filmmaker, the appeal of this ‘outpost camp media lab’ is obvious: ‘being able to edit a movie, take email, and if you see a seal in the bay, you drop everything and go out after it.’ (Zacharias Kunuk, President, Igloolik Isuma Productions, Igloolik, personal communication, August 27, 2001).

In fall 2003, Isuma began developing SILA (www.sila.nu), an e-learning website about Inuit culture based on its current and future films and videos. In Inuktitut, the word sila means ‘atmosphere, the outside, temperature, weather, the world.’ It is the dominant force in the Canadian Arctic, even in today’s modern world. Nature and the vagaries of weather still trump modern technology in the Arctic. Funded by Telefilm Canada’s New Media Fund, SILA represents Isuma’s first large-scale new-media project.

Muecke (1984) also suggests a multi-textual and collaborative approach to documenting Aboriginal history, one that neither privileges one point of view (non-Aboriginal) nor entrenches the dominance of the written word (most often English). Multiple forms of discourse can therefore represent a historical account. In much this vein, ‘Live from the Set’ (http://sila.nu/live), the online production journal that chronicled the six-week shoot of the The Journals of Knud Rasmussen, attempted to capture this diversity of cultures and points of view, as well as document an Inuit style of film-making.

The collaborative authoring tool developed for SILA was first used to produce Live from the Set. The site featured video, audio, and hundreds of photographs produced by a crew of both Inuit and non-Inuit, as well as written ‘blogs’ from ethno-historian Nancy Wachowich (University of Aberdeen), Inuit writer Jobie Weetaluktuk, and Isuma’s own ‘embedded journalist,’ SF Said, a film critic with the London Daily Telegraph, who followed the entire filming process from first shot to production wrap. The goal of the website was to create a space on the Web that would open up a cross-cultural dialogue and intersubjective exchanges between contemporary Inuit life and culture.
and the outside world, between different aesthetic visions, and between different media (audio, video, text, image).

In the hypertextual environment of the Web, these disparate visions could exist simultaneously, even in contradiction. Another way in which Isuma appropriates this new technology for literally travelling across space, to compress vast expanses of geography, is by allowing the world public to connect directly with Inuit artists and the Arctic environment. Considering that forty years ago, travelling to this region of the Arctic was only possible by ship (and took many, many months), and even today is only accessible by air (a return economy plane ticket to Igloolik costs in the order of $3000), Igloolik is still extremely remote and difficult to visit by conventional means.

In the future, Isuma will join forces with other artists and Igloolik-based Nunavut Independent Television Network (NITV; https://nitv.nu) to stream live video and video-on-demand from the community, as well as to interact with other communities in Nunavut and around the world through video conferencing. Isuma is also collaborating with international projects such as Slovene artist Marko Peljhan’s Makrolab (http://makrolab.ljudmila.org/current), an autonomous, mobile arts and science lab that will be permanently installed in Nunavut for Polar Year 2007.

Isuma’s videos, films, and Internet projects demonstrate how a community can appropriate communication tools to serve their own cultural, aesthetic, and linguistic purposes. These audiovisual representations also enable Canadians to connect more directly with the images and their Inuit creators, and to establish a distinct and authentic Inuit voice within a global media discourse.

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Notes
1. In Inuit culture, children are bonded to their ancestors through their Inuit name or namesake—tuqlluraniq. According to Inuit custom, children ‘inherit’ that person’s family relations along with the name. This is reflected in terms of address between people: A young child named after the deceased husband of an elder woman would call her ‘wife,’ for instance. In turn, the elder would call the child ‘husband.’
2. This playfully alludes to the term for journalists who were attached to a military unit involved in an armed conflict during the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

References
Cambodian journalism ‘flying blind’

Eric Loo

With freedom comes great responsibility, says a famous movie script. Not so with the Cambodian press. The many publications owned by as many factions are unrestrained in slandering their adversaries. Everyone’s fair media prey – except for the King. Unbridled reporting with no clear ethical guidelines often sees public decency being violated, which has caused near zero public faith in the media.

There’s the bustling central marketplace, tour buses, overloaded vans and two-stroke tuk tuks weaving through the city streets. Phnom Penh looks like it’s making up for lost time since 1979 when the Vietnamese liberated the royal kingdom from four years of slaughter by Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge genocidal regime. Today, the ‘Hill on Penh’ is another expanding city sprawl of chaotic traffic and choking air, internet cafes, sleazy nightclubs, fine dining – and on the kerbside, the urban poor and homeless.

The Cambodian press looks as brusque and uncontrolled as the cityscape is in disarray. Norbert Klein, editor of The Mirror, an English weekly of translated stories from the Khmer-language papers, says that Cambodian journalism, though chaotic, is ‘among the freest in Asia’ – but also one of the most unregulated in a post-communist country that’s reinventing itself.

With freedom comes great responsibility, says a famous movie script. Not so with the Cambodian press. Graphic journalism sees shock value dominates the front pages of the Khmer papers with pejorative expressions, loaded headlines, and photographs of gore, nudity, violence, and bloodied corpses used somewhat routinely in the daily grind for news that sells.

The many Khmer publications owned by as many factions are likewise unrestrained in slandering their opponents. All are fair media prey – except for the King. Impartial reporting is a non-concept. Partisan politics are explicitly transferred to the text. Taking sides in the news and ideological positioning has created an altered descriptor – media ‘mag-dog’ – grafted into the Cambodian press antics. We’ve seen that happened in the Philippines after ‘people power’ ousted Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, and in Indonesia after the fall of Suharto in 1998.

Reach Sambath, media educator at Royal University of Phnom Penh and press officer for the Khmer Rouge Genocide Tribunal represents what Cambodian journalism could become. A former AFP journalist, Reach received an award in 2000 by US-based Human Rights Watch for his life story before and after the Khmer Rouge. (Reach’s family was killed by Pol Pot’s soldiers in 1981 when he was 13. He and his brother survived.)

Cambodian journalists from 1993-95, says Reach, were like ‘birds freed for the first time, flying in the dark, knocking into trees and wall. (But) over the past few years, things have changed. They have been doing much better. They have quoted people for their stories … use facts and leave their opinions aside. One big problem for them is that they are lazy to read what the others write, and they do not use background to explain to their readers.’

Theoretically, media in post-conflict societies caught up in the novelty of ‘press freedom’ often grope in the dark, with its reporting guided more by journalists’ primeval reactions than any canon of reflective ethical practice. Cambodian journalists, most not formally trained, had their first taste of press freedom in 1991 when the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) assumed part control of the country to prepare for open elections and subsequent democratic rule in 1993.

Part of UNTAC’s mandate was to forge a structure for a free press to grow, which evidently was left to sprout a life of its own.
Without a strong foundation of ethical media practice, the structure has so far remained shaky, and the development of professional journalism, experimental. Educators like Reach, are faced with the task of training future journalists in an ersatz free press culture, which has seen many compelled to take on part-time jobs to supplement their ‘official’ monthly salary of about US$40-50. Official salary figures of journalists and civil servants, however, vary according to where one sources the figures. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation in its 2005 report on media and democracy in Cambodia noted that journalists’ salary relatively ‘is not very low because most civil servants – including soldiers, police officers, teachers and even judges – earn less than US$30 per month’. It adds:

‘But for journalists working for local newspapers these wages are often not enough for daily life and hence they depend on earnings from other sources, i.e. taking gifts, asking for ‘gas money’ or for ‘coffee’. Journalists also often take direct payments for covering news events; usually this comes in envelopes containing some 5,000–20,000 riels (US$1.25–5).’

Kay Kimsong, business editor at Cambodia Daily, notes that ‘there are so many fake journalists who use their media pass from the Ministry of Information to gain favour or to bribe their sources, which mirrors the ‘hacks for hire’ practice in the Philippines.’

Kay notes three types of journalists in Cambodia: ‘First, are the independent journalists working for foreign media like The Cambodia Daily, Phnom Penh Post, Voice of America, Radio Free Asia and French Cambodge Soir. These journalists are well paid [US$250-700 a month] and have taken training courses abroad or in local university.’

‘Second, are the pro-CPP (Cambodian Peoples Party) journalists reporting for local media. Some of them report good things or activities of the CPP officials, to make sources happy, then claim bribes from the official. These journalists sometimes criticized Funcinpec officials.

‘Third, are the pro-Funcinpec journalists who work for local newspapers backed by the party. These journalists also take bribe at events, seminars, workshops … their articles criticize CPP officials or government activity.’

The fractionalized media structure has created a paradox. Government press conferences and events are open to all journalists, but not all have equal access to information held by different government sources.

Kay’s observation echoes KAF’s assessment, which notes that ‘normally, only the reporters who are pro-government or close to the ruling parties can easily get access to information, whereas those who are working for opposition parties are usually excluded. Press conferences are normally broadcast by state-owned stations. Therefore, the independent channels rarely or almost never report on government press conferences.’

This paradox leaves most newspapers hostage to political patronage, and, consequently, distorts the economics of the newspaper business. Klein estimates that 99% of local advertising revenue goes to just ten newspapers – out of some 30 publishing regularly in Phnom Penh and 266 existing press licenses as of 2005. Rasmei Kampuchea, the main Khmer daily, alone takes up nearly a quarter of the advertising revenue.

Founded in 1993 by a Thai newspaper group in a joint venture with Theng Bun Ma, a Hun Sen ally, Rasmei Kampuchea is seen as the ‘good’ paper in Phnom Penh, which, says editor Pen Semiththy, has consistently worked to ‘professionalise’ its practice.

Pen is credited for establishing the Khmer broadsheet as a ‘model of reliable journalism’ in Cambodia. Educated in Moscow in the 1980s, Pen claims authority as s strident ‘objective critic’ of both the government and the opposition, moving it away from its previous tag as a pro-CPP paper.

Pen says that the lack of a code of ethics and professional benchmarks is hampering the progress of Cambodian journalism – thus the series of defamation charges against journalists last year. For the first time, as president of the Club of Cambodian Journalists, Pen says he has been able to gather different journalist organi-
and editors to talk about ‘solidarity’ among journalists in raising the standards of journalism, and to defend their rights.

Recalibrating journalist’s moral compass

One wonders if four years of atrocities by Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge have destroyed whatever common moral values and institutional integrity there were in Cambodian society. A generation of intellectuals and their families were killed by the Khmer Rouge, the memories graphically kept alive at the genocide museum (formerly Khmer Rouge S-21 prison) in Tuol Seng. The result: about 70% of the generally young population above 15 today can’t read or write. The emigration of Cambodia’s elites and professionals over the last decade has also, according to observers, ‘altered the country’s institutional legacy’.7

Hun Sen’s government has shut down newspapers in the mid-90s for what were deemed to be journalists’ disrespectful, deliberate insults of government leaders. A well-known case was in 1999 when several newspapers conjectured that Prime Minister Hun Sen’s wife caused the death of the country’s most popular actress, reputed to be Hun Sen’s mistress. In 2002, there were 9 cases of lawsuits, suspensions and arrests; 13 cases in 2003; and 19 in 2004.8 The standard response now is an admonishment from the Ministry of Information. A public apology from the media will suffice to continue business.

My talks with local journalists paint a somewhat optimistic, albeit guarded, anticipation following the Prime Minister Hun Sen’s announcement on April 21 that defamation by the media will no longer result in imprisonment of journalists. Radio stations, such as The Women Media Centre’s FM102, and Beehive Radio Station’s FM 105 have also been allowed to operate despite their critical on-air commentaries of public officials. The US-funded Radio Free Asia and Voice of America was pulled by the Cambodian government in 2002, but went back on air in 2003 through leased airtime with Beehive Radio.9

The major shift in the government’s relationship with the media can, perhaps, be understood in two ways: first, the government’s attempt to show its commitment to full democratization, particularly to the country’s Western donor nations in the Consultative Group, which met in Phnom Penh 2-3 March 2006. Second, in the context of the high literacy rate in Cambodia, the government does not see the media much of a threat. The Club of Cambodian Journalists estimate that on average about 12,000 to 15,000 readers regularly buy and read a newspaper in Phnom Penh.10

The KAF report also notes:

“The media have rather little influence on the formation of political opinion. The media is not considered very relevant by the government, and therefore, the authorities usually ignore most media reports, even those which are critical of the government’s performance. Given this fact, people do not like to express their opinion in the media because they think politicians pay little attention to them. The ordinary citizens think that politics are the job and game of politicians. In the same context, the politicians do not want to use their political platform to consult their people. They would rather go with their own choice. Together, the attitudes and behaviour of both citizens and rulers show that the political culture still poses a big obstacle to democratic consolidation.”11

Hun Sen’s April announcement came with the caution that journalists ‘draft their articles well’ to avoid lawsuits. As it now stands, Article 63 of the UNTAC Law of 1992 on criminal defamation and libel in Cambodia provides for preventive detention of journalists and a sentence of a year in prison or a fine of 10 million riels (US$2,652). Amendment of Article 63 will just do away with the prison sentence.12

Meanwhile, the road towards ethical professional journalism – that is by Western standards – remain blocked by low salaries, culture of political patronage and impunity, the government’s ambivalent relationship with the media, and low literacy rate, which to an extent makes journalists feel little concern for accountability in what they write.
Reach recognizes that Cambodian journalists urgently need long-term professional training and accreditation ‘like doctors, nurses and lawyers’. However, he cautions against the ‘old style of using helicopter or parachute training’ where the ‘trainers come for a few days, did not even finish the jet lag yet. Then he or she goes to conduct the training and then eating cakes and dinners and fly back to their home country’.

Which reminds me of a conversation with the assistant group editor of The Nation in Bangkok, Kavi Chongkittavorn. Indeed, he said, Cambodian journalists, being ‘among the freest in Asia’ have more in common with their counterparts in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia than those from the ‘West’. Their media realities, history and culture are so far from Cambodia’s that the training provided by Western trainers, while informative, is sometimes irrelevant.

Notes
3. Ibid. p. 98
4. Available 2005 figures of the media in Cambodia provided by the Ministry of Information are as follows: newspapers (266); bulletins (27); media associations (13); magazines 58; international media organizations (35); agency and foreign television representatives (11). No definitions of local or foreign media available.
5. In August 2005, the Cambodian Supreme Court upheld a guilty verdict against Cambodian Daily business editor Kay Kimsong, charging him for writing a ‘defamatory’ article in 2001 about Foreign Affairs Minister Hor Namhong’s relations with Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge. Kay’s article quoted words by a Senate member said during an official debate. The Cambodian Daily reported that Kimsong ‘declined strong requests from a Supreme Court official who asked for a bribe in return for discarding the suit’. The Foreign Affairs Minister dropped the case in April following Hun Sen’s announcement that defamation would be decriminalized. In October, Prime Minister Hun Sen filed defamation charges against a journalist and seven human rights activists who criticised him for signing the special border treaty on Oct 10 with Vietnam. The charges were dropped on 24 January 2006 year after the defendants submitted written apologies to Hun Sen.
6. For example, the Cambodian Association for the Protection of Journalists (CAPJ) and the League of Cambodian Journalists (LCJ) - both associate members of the International Federation of Journalists.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid. p. 97
12. In a joint statement on 28 April 2006, the Alliance for Freedom of Expression in Cambodia, and Article 19 called on Hun Sen’s government to judge defamation cases under the civil code instead. The statement said: ‘as set out in the ARTICLE 19 publication, Defining Defamation: Principles on Freedom of Expression and Protection of Reputation, defamation laws should aim to protect the reputations of individuals. They should not protect other interests, for example the ‘reputation’ of the government or the State. In particular, it is inappropriate to use defamation laws to maintain public order or national security, as was intended by the authors of the UNTAC law.’ http://www.article19.org/publications/global-issues/defamation.html (Accessed 10 May, 2006)

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Media and social change in Africa

On 25 March 2006 more than 100 people attended the second of a series of conferences on the media in Africa at the Marylebone Campus of the University of Westminster, London.

This new venture for CAMRI (the Communication and Media Research Institute, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University) will result in an ongoing programme of conferences and events and the launch of a new journal – The Journal of African Media Studies. Both conferences and the journal will be pan-African in scope, covering all of the continent’s land mass.

Among the speakers and the audience were those from across Africa, some still living on the continent and some who are studying or living elsewhere. There were also non-African participants from British, European and North American universities, from NGOs and from broadcasters, including the BBC, journalists and publishers with interests in media and Africa.

The original keynote speakers, Kimani Gecau and Louise Bourgault, were unable to attend, but hope to be able to come to future conferences. Professor Paddy Scannell of the University of Westminster stepped in at short notice as keynote speaker. Professor Scannell has a wide experience of working in Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Scannell took the unusual step of talking about the life and experience of Kimani Gecau, who is a personal friend, and of relating this to the experiences of African intellectuals.

The papers’ themes were wide-ranging, considering aspects of media from the African film industry to radio. Additionally, there were papers that looked at television, media coverage of the AIDS crisis: music and literature; at media training and professional practice: textual and visual analysis, freedom of speech and human rights. Unsurprisingly, similar themes were heard in many papers. Some of these were globalisation and its resultant benefits and problems; post-colonialism, globalization and their effects on the media’s indigenization in Africa. Other recurrent issues were the rural/urban divide and the Western media’s tendency to report only the bad news on Africa and even on perceived attempts to infantilise the African.

While, perhaps following the media’s lead, some presenters focused on ‘bad news’, e.g. in relation to AIDS/HIV, there were those who brought attention to problematics that are often ignored. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, for example, spoke on the poor pay and resource poverty of journalists in Sierra Leone (which is not alone in having such problems).

However, there were some papers that demonstrated how Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry’s rise, and the increasing importance of radio experienced to interesting developments because cheaper and more usable technologies are now much more readily available. A side benefit of this availability is that more people are able to enter the media marketplace and those media have become more indigenized.

The University of Oslo’s Professor Helge Rønning presented a paper on the problems that corruption (which was also discussed elsewhere) had brought to many African countries. He reiterated a quotation from Nigeria’s President Obasanjo, who said that 25% of the money in Africa, often money that has come from development agencies, is lost through corruption. Small, close-knit elite groups, who extract this money, are often responsible for such high level corruption, which has increased
the likelihood of petty corruption becoming almost endemic in some countries.

While Africa is not alone in suffering from this scourge, Rønning suggested that in places where the media had given greater coverage to corruption and thus public awareness is greater, the corruption seemed almost to have become naturalized. During the question and answer session, Rønning affirmed that he held that where there was no connection between the judicial system and the press or other media, exposés of corruption had no resultant benefit. Most African states, he proposed, have weak governments, often with an elite that is self-serving. Where such a self-serving elite is present and where, in addition, ‘top’ jobs, i.e. those with some prestige, for instance, civil service positions, are low paid, corruption was likely to be more prevalent.

Post-presentation sessions devoted to questions from the audience and answers from panellists (and sometimes for experts in the audience) were lively and searching. The audience was made up of an interesting mixture of the very knowledgeable, through those already working or studying in the area, to those seeking more information in order to develop a greater understanding of this new and exciting corner of the field of media studies.

It was generally felt that ‘The Media and Social Change in Africa’ was both timely and successful. As at most conferences, some topics were covered in more detail than others, but the spread of papers was both wide and deep. The conference team intends to hold another conference in 2007, with a provisional date in March being suggested. The likely title is ‘The Media and Democracy in Africa’. Anyone who would like to be updated on future developments, or who would like more information about the Journal of African Media Studies, should contact Dr Winston Mano, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, by email on manow@wmin.ac.uk

Report by Maria Way, lecturer in Media Theory and a member of CAMRI at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, School of Media, Arts and Design, University of Westminster.

ON THE PAGE...


Anchored in the philosophical and historical work of Charles Taylor (1994) and using a variety of approaches and empirical evidence from across Africa, essays in Rights and the Politics of Recognition in Africa, interrogate how the local context and African specificities challenge the dominant liberal theories of democracy. Arising from two conferences with different but related themes, the essays share an overriding task of exposing the inadequacies of the neoliberal ideology in plural societies and offering critical perspectives into the challenges of democracy in contemporary Africa.

The authors demonstrate that, despite the global spread of liberal ideology, it is important to examine how variations of culture and socio-political realities challenge the meaning and application of universal values such as democracy and rights. A decade since several countries underwent a series of democratic reforms there are still no tangible results on the ground and a vast majority in Africa have still to realise the benefits of these liberal reforms.

The contributors to this volume bring critical perspectives to the politics of recognition and assess prospects for alternatives, particularly in view of African specificities. As Englund asks, ‘What is it about Africa that warrants a separate consideration of its challenges to the politics of recognition?’ The authors interrogate what the study of Africa can contribute to understanding the politics of recognition, and show that even though this topic has remained largely ignored in the mainstream academic discussion, African polities are quite as much entangled in the politics of recognition as are the more well-known examples from Europe and North America.

Using the politics of recognition as an entry
point to the problematical question of democracy and drawing upon empirical examples from Africa, the essays tackle the rhetoric of rights within the context of global spread of neoliberalism. One of the central themes that runs across the collection is the ambivalent connections between theory and practice, for example, the relationship between the rhetoric of rights and their actual realisation. As Nyamnjoh argues ‘a critical look beneath the rhetoric of rights appears to point to the fact that being an individual in the liberal democratic sense of the word is both a process and a luxury that few can afford in reality’ (p.34).

Individuals attracted by the rhetoric of rights soon find themselves confronted by numerous ways in which these rights are bargained away. Using examples from Botswana, Nyamnjoh argues that discussions of democracy in contemporary Africa impair understanding of the interconnectedness of peoples, cultures and communities, when they insist narrowly on individual rights, freedoms and aspirations. He argues that the Batswana, like other Africans, have been quick to recognize the limitations of liberal democracy and its rhetoric of rights.

Arguing from a legal human rights perspective, Kanyongolo also asks whether the equality promised in the rhetoric of rights can be achieved in countries with glaring disparities like Malawi. Chapters by Johnson and Jacobs, and Halsteen show the contrasting understandings of rights, the contradictions on the meaning of democracy and the limits of civic freedoms in ensuring genuine democratization.

Challenges to democratization are raised in the book, where ideological factors, inequalities, minority rights, questions of identity, gender and religion are discussed in relation to specific countries across Africa. The empirical examples used by the authors demonstrate the multi-dimensional nature of the debate on the politics of recognition and its implications to the very meaning of democracy and human rights.

The questions addressed in this book show that exploring the politics of recognition in post-colonial Africa is a quest for alternatives, for new insights that take Africa beyond its present stagnation in the democratisation process. The empirical examples used reveal that democratization in Africa is not a simple process with predetermined means and goals but a complex one that does not allow for conventional methods of comparison. There is, therefore, a need to be cautious against the generalisations that seem to characterise a number of books on Africa.

In tackling the complexity of the African realities, Rights and the Politics of Recognition in Africa contributes to a new academic movement towards rethinking and repositioning the issues of democracy and rights, citizenship and belonging, and stimulates further questions for research. These issues have already been subjected to substantial comment and analysis elsewhere. A whole range of arguments, empirical and analytical literature on African politics confronts the elusive concepts of democracy and rights, and yet each enquiry only succeeds in raising more questions.

While the volume makes a significant contribution to the African literature on the politics of recognition, the variety of empirical domains and themes pursued by the authors undermine the coherence and depth of inquiry into the specific themes. The diversity of the book’s central theme underscores the lack of theoretical contextualisation. It is obviously a daunting task to transform papers presented in two different conferences with different thematic approaches into a coherent unit that fully explores the depth and width of the subject in question.

Ultimately the contributors are caught up in the web of elucidating conventional problems, using some key concepts at a superficial level of clarification. For example, the authors have different and sometimes diametrically opposed perspectives on the concept of citizenship and civil society. Perhaps and more importantly readers would identify for themselves that these are contested concepts inclined to plural usages. The politics of recognition is an invitation for further enquiry and this book takes the discussions onto new ground.

Review by Nkosi Ndlela, Associate Professor, Hedmark University College, Norway.
Finding reasons to educate for peace, promoting tolerance that does not just mean ‘putting up’ with other people, following a path of inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, developing solidarity and defending human rights is the only way of making a new world possible.

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