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IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The 1/2011 issue of Media Development will take a critical look at the phenomenon of social media, the pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages.
EDITORIAL

For many years *Media Development* has benefitted from the wisdom and professional advice of its Editorial Consultants.

First constituted in 1984 and reformed on at least two occasions, these women and men – six of each given WACC’s concern for media and gender equity – keep an eye on the journal’s quality and content. Fortunately, they have never had cause for complaint: at least, none has yet written asking for their name to be removed.

When themes are selected, the usual procedure is to ask the Editorial Consultants if they know of able and articulate communication practitioners who might contribute an article from the perspective of a particular discipline or context.

Unfailingly, they respond with names and e-mail addresses and their dedication to that task has ensured that over the years new voices and young communicators, many from countries of the global South, have had an opportunity to express their views.

From time to time an Editorial Consultant can be enticed to join the fray and to write an article on a particular aspect of his or her interests. Rarely, however, does an editor offer them carte blanche to write whatever they like. That is, until now.

This issue of *Media Development* is unique in that it contains material written expressly for the journal by its Editorial Consultants. They were invited to contribute an article on a vital topic that urged opinion or that had perhaps been sitting on the back burner.

The sole stipulation was that the topic should relate in some way to communication, mass or community media, and – if possible – be controversial.

As expected, the results are interesting, challenging, thought-provoking, and agenda-setting.

Clifford G. Christians tackles the need for a dynamic, robust religious ethics, arguing that it testifies to the ultimate reality of human existence and provides us with the vocabulary for discussing it.

He comments that, ‘To the relativists who say morality is meaningless, religious ethics opens our eyes to a human domain where morality makes sense.’

Margaret Gallagher tackles the vexed question of ‘what has feminist scholarship contributed to the field of communication research?’ With notable and laudable exceptions, she laments the continuing absence of a cross-disciplinary and validatory approach to feminist scholarship in diverse communication disciplines.

Robert A. Hackett questions the nature of the public sphere and the capacity of mass and alternative media to provide object lessons in a world of political indifference. ‘Resistance to the engines of global inequality and destruction is essential; genuinely democratic public spheres are arguably both a precondition and an outcome of that process.’

Cees J. Hamelink identifies one of the great challenges of the 21st century as shifting from ‘instrumental’ to ‘relational’ communication. He believes that learning to communicate through music, especially jazz with its emphasis on the ability to listen and dialogue, are vital to meeting that challenge.

Pat Made considers media activism in the context of Southern Africa. Vigilance is vital to democratic accountability, but ‘the media should at the same time create the conditions for real societal agreement or compromise based on open discussion of differences rather than a contrived consensus based on elite dominance.’

Robert W. McChesney argues that the outcome of today’s communication policy battles will go a long way toward shaping future society. If it is possible to ‘institute genuine decently funded community and independent media, not under the thumb of the state, we may begin to see the contours of something truly revolutionary: a genuinely democratic public sphere.’

Clemencia Rodriguez identifies key research and intervention areas that have been neglected and which have the potential to take the field of communication for social change into more exciting and promising realms. ‘One of these pioneering ideas is the notion of communication as performance.’

Pradip N. Thomas proposes a global analysis of the journeys undertaken by development concepts that have long been taken for granted and which now need to be reconceived if they are to remain useful. ‘In order to redeem concepts, perhaps we need to begin to think of them as unfinished, always in the making, shaped in translation and in location.’

*Media Development*’s Editorial Consultants are eminent communication professionals involved in a myriad pursuits and activities. The articles collected in this issue represent an opportunity to benefit from their collective insights and to acknowledge publicly WACC’s indebtedness to their continuing support.
Religious ethics up front

Clifford G. Christians

Religious ethics in secular societies is stuck on the margins. Communication ethics in these days of global media needs all the good thinking it can muster. But at this challenging time in history, a resource once generally available has fallen on hard times in North America and Europe. As the world moves to make media ethics international and intercultural, religious ethics outside secular cultures are contributing and must be understood. But with the West estranged from a religious perspective, it cannot participate meaningfully. My dream is religious ethics up front in communication studies across the globe, enriching teachers, media professionals, and community workers on justice, truth, and human dignity.

The Hastings Carnegie studies in 1980, of professional ethics in higher education in North America, opposed religious ethics. They were intensely concerned about indoctrination in the classroom, except in devoutly religious institutions where students understood and accepted the belief system. That approach to ethics has generally prevailed. There has been growing academic interest in North America in the sociology of religion and in the news coverage of religion, but little progress in bringing theological and sacred studies into media ethics, either its theory or application.

Colleagues in German universities remind us of their situation in a secular age. They deal with the greatest tragedy of the 20th century for the West—the Holocaust—with only limited resources. Religious ethics has no credibility in their institutions and civic culture, and therefore only the philosophical tradition is available to them. In confronting urgent issues such as the distribution of media technologies in the developing world, one hand is tied behind their back. The prominent German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, recognizes the problem (2003). He has put religion on his intellectual agenda during the last stage of his career, seeking help from it in understanding the crises of the modern age.

For those of us concerned about media ethics, we cannot advance the field without taking account of the great religions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and indigenous spiritism. In Hans Küng’s Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic (1991) the world’s religions promote such common values as social justice, human rights, and the immorality of war. Communication ethics from Martin Buber to Emmanuel Levinas is Jewish. The Dalai Lama’s bestselling book, Ethics for the New Millennium is written for all, though it is spiritual in character.

Karol Wojtyla (better known as Pope John Paul II) explicates horizontal love (human-to-human) and vertical love (divine-to-human and human-to-divine) as a trained philosopher speaking to the human race, not as official teaching for the Roman Catholic Church (1981). If these kinds of religious initiatives were flourishing around the globe, communication ethics would have a rich resource for meeting today’s challenges.

What history teaches

Western philosophy is incoherent without religion, and to assume that ethics today can survive without it is ahistorical. Aristotle mentions God or the gods in the Nicomachean Ethics roughly twice as often as he mentions happiness. In Aristotle, God or the gods have the best kind of life, and human life is best to the degree it resembles divine life, which is done most distinctively by contemplating God and the essence of things. ‘Contemplating God is in fact the only thing God does, in Aristotle’s view, since for God to think about anything less than God would be for God to become like something less than God, which would be to have a less good life’ (Hare, 2003, p. 3). Aristotle doesn’t make sense without his religious beliefs.

Kant learned the notion of a categorical im-
perative from his pietist Lutheran parents in Prussia, and theism plays a central role in his ethics. Humans are ends in themselves and not merely means in Kant. We belong to a kingdom of ends in which all human beings have equal and infinite value. ‘But a kingdom has a king, as Kant says in his *Groundwork*, a Head of the kingdom of ends to which we mere members have duties, but who has no duties to us’ (Hare, 2003, p. 8). Through reason we know the moral law, says Kant, but this only condemns us. God accomplishes in us a revolution of the will which means recognizing our duties as commands from the Head of the Kingdom and not something we can accomplish on our own.

For ethical theories based on consequences, a great philosopher is Henry Sidgwick at the end of the 19th century. His major work, *The Methods of Ethics*, ends with the following dilemma:

‘We can imagine a situation in which reason in the form of self-interest requires us to do one thing, and reason in the form of morality requires us to do something else. Indeed, Sidgwick thought all of us find ourselves at key points of our lives in such situations’ (Hare, 2003, p. 9).

What appeal can we make, then, to persuade ourselves that we should do our duty?

‘His answer was that only an appeal to God will do, because our belief in God gives us a sufficiently robust sense that morality is consistent, so to speak, with the flow of the universe’ (Hare, 2003, p. 9). Without religion, utilitarian ethics is incoherent.

**Why be moral?**

An inescapable contribution of traditional ethics is that it seriously addressed the question, ‘Why be moral?’ With religion saturating the philosophical framework, the rationale for acting morally was transparent. Should ethical imperatives not inspire us to obey them, morality as a whole is meaningless. If communication ethics attempts to exist today without religious ethics built into it, where is its authority for making moral demands on us?

In religious ethics we act morally to be true to ourselves. We can tell what is good for us by looking at what we are naturally inclined to act upon. Doing the good benefits our human flourishing. Like a magnetic force, the good compels me as a moral agent. My own identity is the authority for acting morally. It is obvious in family life that self interest, politics, and economics do not exhaust our motivations. Regarding the environment, a vocabulary of moral obligation is taking shape that will help ensure social and cultural change.

But without religious ethics in the mix, we turn to psychoanalytic, economic, and political motivations to get things done, and the moral domain is typically rendered impotent. Once again the urgent conclusion: A secularized morality will not be able to answer convincingly, ‘Why should I be moral?’

Notice the contrast with one religious ethics and how it builds authority and inspiration into its very structure. Love is the centerpiece of Judeo-Christian ethics, though some ethicists in this tradition make obedience or justice or peace supreme. The classic contribution of this religious perspective, in its mainline form, contends that ultimately humans stand under only one moral command: to love God and humankind. ‘Love your neighbour’ is normative and uniquely so in this tradition, because love characterizes the very heart of the universe.

The norm here is giving and forgiving with uncritical spontaneity and spending oneself to fulfill a neighbour’s well-being. Martin Luther King’s leadership in racial reconciliation was fundamentally inspired by it. Divine love is the supreme good. The inexhaustible, self-generating nature of God Himself is love. Therefore, human love has its inspiration, motive, and ground in the highest reaches of eternity.

A major 20th century Protestant theologian, H. Richard Niebuhr, turned Christian love ethics into a definition of the person as *The Responsible Self*. In so doing, he demonstrates how religious ethics benefits moral philosophy. The self is dynamic, in his view; our personhood is manifest in the act of answering. ‘Our relation to other selves is primary; we respond to responders; …the self [is] in dialogue with the community’ (Niebuhr, 1963, pp. 52, 60).

The ethical person does not live according to formal laws that must be obeyed, but as a human being living in community. This kind of responsible humanness was compelling to Niebuhr, more so than appealing to duty or good consequences. He intended in his formulation to make the love commandment a
moral demand for all humans. Whether believers or atheists, we are motivated to be moral because we cannot be ourselves except in relation with others.

Relativism
Relativism is the term typically used to describe the challenges we face today in media ethics. Relativism is a longstanding problem in secular societies, since Friedrich Nietzsche made it inescapable in the late 19th century. Now relativism has reached maturity and a comprehensiveness that makes all ethics questionable. In Nietzsche’s terms, in a world where God has died and everything lacks meaning, morality has no content. We live in an era beyond good and evil. For Nietzsche, morality had reached the end of the line.

For relativists in the Nietzschean tradition, the right and good are only known in local space and language. Therefore, these concepts and propositions are considered to have no validity elsewhere. Cultural diversity typically means moral relativism. Since all cultures are presumed to be equal, all value systems are equally valid.

I believe that when religious ethics is strong, we can respond meaningfully to relativism. The typical answer goes something like this: Because some customs are relative to the local situation, it does not follow that all are relative. Differences in specific practices does not mean that no moral judgments can be made about major historical events – Stalinism, genocide, genital mutilation, apartheid in South Africa, Nazism, and so forth. It is necessary in a global age to honour cultural diversity while simultaneously rejecting moral relativism, and religious ethics can accomplish that.

Though there can be agreement in ethics that some acts are wrong, the most critical overall need is to establish what is usually called realism. Realism means that there is a reality outside ourselves that exists. It means that our creativity as humans works within a natural order. From a realist perspective, we discover truths about the world that exist within it.

And, therefore, the importance of a dynamic, robust religious ethics. All religious ethics promotes the idea that humans are moral beings living in a world beyond themselves. It does not necessarily mean a metaphysics or supernatural arena abstract from ourselves. The holy or numinous Rudolf Otto (1950) called it a sacred mystery surrounding our being, that is, spirituality as a dimension of our humanness. In Paul Tillich’s (1959) terms, ultimate reality is the ground of being (1959). Religious ethics testifies to this reality and gives us a vocabulary for discussing it. To the relativists who say morality is meaningless, religious ethics opens our eyes to a human domain where morality makes sense.

Examples
Against these formidable obstacles, some important work in the religious ethics of the media is being accomplished. They indicate what kind of scholarship in religious ethics needs to be multiplied for the field of communication to be healthy. Jolyon Mitchell (2007) argues that everyday Christian practices, intertwined in the experience of worship, create the ability for audiences to reframe violent images toward peacemaking. Anantha Babili’s (1997: 128-58) essay on Hindu ethics shows how ethical principles from Hinduism can be applied to the media context.

Islamic ethics is interpreted by such media scholars as Mohammad Siddiqi (2000) and Muhammad Ayish and Haydar Badawi Sadiq (1997: 105-27). Ronald Arnett’s work on Dietrich Bonhoeffer (2005) shows that the faith story is indispensable for contending with overwhelming injustice. An important perspective on media ethics is opened up by Shelton Gunaratne’s humanocentric theory of the news media in his Dao of the Press (2005). He integrates the theory of living systems with Eastern philosophy and religion – particularly Buddhism, Hinduism, Daoism and Confucianism. The result is a dynamic perspective to replace the static theories of the press rooted in Western epistemology.

Should this kind of work be relegated to the margins, media ethics will only be dealing with secondary or one-dimensional issues. When it is multiplied one hundred-fold, and is cited in the literature and taught in the classroom, media ethics will be equipped for today’s global challenges and opportunities.

References
Feminist scholarship in communication

Margaret Gallagher

When in 1986 Brenda Dervin devoted her ICA (International Communication Association) presidential address to the subject of feminist scholarship and communication, it was a courageous and daring departure from tradition. The conventional topics of presidential addresses – variations on the grand themes of communication theory, method or structure – were considered weighty and worthy of these occasions. But feminism? At best, surely this was a minority interest, with no claim to be awarded the gravitas naturally accorded to the canonical issues of communication. It was precisely this assumption that Dervin set out to question in her presidential lecture.

The first woman to be elected president of the ICA, Dervin did not consider herself a feminist scholar. However, as a critical media researcher, she was both open to the insights she found in the work of feminist colleagues and aware that this work was consistently ignored in the ‘authoritative’ communication literature. Something of a cause célèbre among feminist media scholars at that time was the absence of any feminist scholarship in the 1983 special issue of the Journal of Communication entitled ‘Ferment in the Field’. It brought together 35 essays from leading scholars in 10 countries to ‘address critical issues and research tasks of the discipline’.

However, none of the essays engaged with the need for a feminist perspective on communication issues or research. Even Gaye Tuchman, one of the few female authors included, whose study of media ‘framing’ of the U.S. women’s movement was one
of the first to show how feminist analysis can illuminate communication theory and process (in this case the role of the news media in constructing reality: Tuchman, 1978), referred to that study merely in parenthesis in her essay on critical approaches to the production of culture (Tuchman, 1983: 335).

The invisibility of feminist scholarship in ‘Ferment in the Field’ was, said Dervin in her ICA presidential address, illustrative of the ‘de-centering’ of this work within communication, where in some quarters it was ‘devalued, seen as trivial’. As a result, despite its transformative potential, the question ‘what has feminist scholarship contributed to the field of communication research’ could only produce the answer ‘very little’ (Dervin, 1987: 111).

To some extent Dervin’s ICA address was a symbolic gesture – an insistence that feminist scholarship merited the level and degree of consideration given to other approaches to the study of communication. In other ways it was a critique of communication as a discipline – a view that feminist work, with its self-reflexive method, its interdisciplinary approach, its emphasis on gender as the fundamental organising category in human experience, could contribute to a more complete theoretical basis for understanding communication structures, processes and practices. At the time, both the gesture and the critique must have seemed incomprehensible to some, implausible to others.

**Limited acknowledgement**

A quarter of a century later, things have changed. Probably most communication scholars are now aware that feminist perspectives have expanded the fields of study within the discipline, though some may be under the impression that this contribution has amounted to ‘a trend in “softer” topics being researched’ (Thussu, 2009: 2). Although Thussu does not elaborate on this comment, it presumably refers to feminist work in the cultural studies tradi-
tion, which has focused on gender representation, audience reception, and textual analysis. There is certainly a substantial body of feminist research in these areas, and it is important to recognise both its innovatory nature and its historical specificity. For by giving legitimacy to the academic study of previously ignored questions, especially within popular culture, feminists as far back as the 1970s were actually addressing the issue of hierarchy within media research itself – a hierarchy which persists to this day, for example, in the labelling of certain topics as ‘soft’.

It is of course quite wrong to equate feminist scholarship solely with the study of representation in, and reception of, media texts. A concern with power, rights and democracy has been at the heart of feminist media analysis since its earliest days; and, particularly over the past 15 years, there has been a growing body of feminist work on globalization, media policy, technology development, and political economy. Yet authoritative communication textbooks – if they acknowledge feminism at all – continue to ignore these dimensions of the feminist contribution.

For instance, the highly influential McQuail’s *Mass Communication Theory*, now in its sixth edition, situates feminist theory and scholarship exclusively in the context of culture, representation, texts and audiences. There is no consideration of feminism in relation to theories of media and society, media freedom and accountability, media economics and governance, global media issues, or political communication. Thus readers are left with the impression that feminism is unconnected with these core matters in the communication curriculum, and that its concerns are limited to the sphere of gender identity and its construction. In this interpretation feminist media scholarship is seen as a *specialisation* within communication, rather than as a *perspective* to be applied to the field as a whole.

The presentation of feminism as a ‘specialism within’ rather than an ‘approach to’ communication is prevalent in key texts in the field, and is one of the reasons for the continued marginalisation of feminist media scholarship. One of the ways in which this happens is through the inclusion of the feminist chapter in anthologies or collections. This chapter is usually expected to set out an overall feminist analysis of the topic in question, while the other chapters provide more conventional perspectives. A typical recent example is the *Handbook of Journalism Studies*, which ‘sets out to comprehensively chart the field and define the agenda for future research in an international context’ (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009: xi).

In one chapter Linda Steiner ably sets out the feminist position on key issues in journalism. There are very brief references to feminist work in four other chapters – on news sources, journalism history, ethics, and news discourse. But 25 of the chapters (from a total of 30) show no awareness of relevant feminist research, which could actually illuminate almost all of the volume’s topics – on journalism education, agenda setting, gatekeepers, news values and selection, alternative journalism, news framing, development journalism, news routines, audience reception, coverage of war and peace, to mention just the most obvious.

Here we face the question posed by the customary inclusion of ‘the feminist chapter’: who actually reads it? The same question applies to feminist media research in general. The complete absence of reference to feminist work in the accounts of leading scholars in the *Handbook* – and this volume is just one example among many – suggests that feminist scholarship continues to be seen as a minority interest positioned at the periphery of the communication field, rather than as an approach with the potential to inform the core concerns of the field as a whole and thus deserving a wide readership.

The ‘outsider’ position ascribed to feminist media research can mean that it is literally written out of the history of the field. In James Curran’s account of the Westminster tradition of communication research in the United Kingdom, for instance, the school’s limited but pioneering feminist scholarship is consigned to a footnote. Though Curran disarmingly confesses that its omission from his chronicle is ‘unforgivable’, the perception of this work as being ‘outside the Westminster tradition’ (2004: 36) precludes it from consideration in the main narrative.

**Unrealised potential**

In some ways the failure of scholars in established communication areas to read and relate feminist research to their work may be simply an aspect of the general inertia that imprisons some specialists
within their particular versions of the ivory tower. As John Downing has trenchantly put it, learning about new subjects and making sense of the untidy complexities they introduce into one’s own discipline, ‘sounds like hard work. And what is the tenure and promotion pay-off?’ (2003: 508).

A decade ago, Graham Murdock pointed out that, despite the wealth of feminist writing on class and gender, most class analysts appear unwilling – or unable – to assimilate these insights within their existing models and theories (2000: 20). Yet as Murdock went on to show, by integrating feminist perspectives into his ‘reconstruction’ of a class analysis of communication and culture in emerging capitalist formations, such assimilations can be rewarding and illuminating.

Other ‘revisionist’ exercises of this sort have produced equally fruitful results. Eileen Meehan’s reworking (2002) of her early gender-neutral research into the commodity audience, Phillip Tomkins and colleagues’ revision (2009) of their study of organisational dynamics, Ellen Balka’s retelling (2002) of the gender-blind history of changes in the Canadian telecommunications industry – these examples show what a feminist-inspired approach can add to our grasp of complex communication processes and practices. Frequently this is achieved by moving away from a purely abstract level of analysis to a point of entry that recognises the actions and experience of the people who exist within these processes and practices.

How then should we respond today to the question ‘what has feminist scholarship contributed to the field of communication research?’ For some, the answer will still be an emphatic ‘very little’. Marie-Joseph Bertini, for instance, claims that the marginalisation of gender studies in French communication sciences is not even a matter of blindness or indifference, but of outright and persistent rejection (2009: 170). But wherever we look, the answer must surely be ‘not enough’.

Certainly we can now find scholars in diverse communication disciplines who engage seriously with feminist work. Nick Couldry (2010) draws on a range of feminist theorists in his study of the crisis in ‘voice’ within neoliberalism. Vincent Mosco (2009) integrates feminist standpoint theory and theories of gender in the most recent edition of his political economy of communication. James Curran (2002) includes a ‘feminist narrative’ in his exposition of six competing narratives of British media history. Developments like these are crucial not just because they help to legitimise feminist scholarship, but because they allow feminists to engage in peer-to-peer dialogue – and sometimes disagreement (DiCenzo, 2004) – with scholars outside the feminist tradition. For feminist media researchers, this is an enormously refreshing experience. It is also a rare one.

A quarter of a century after ‘Ferment in the Field’, three leading communication scholars came together at Columbia University, New York, to discuss the publication’s impact on media and communication research, ‘the relevance today of the debates it stirred, and the state of the field now, 26 years later’ (Sjøvaag and Moe, 2009: 130). The discussion was of course impressive and wide-ranging. But, just as in ‘Ferment in the Field’, feminist scholarship did not feature within it.

References
Robert A. Hackett

Writing in a cabin on a beautiful British Columbian island, my spirit is massaged by towering evergreens, cloud-studded blue sky, chirping birds, wandering deer. It’s a paradoxical place to contemplate the planetary holocaust unfolding almost daily in the news.

The summer of 2010 brought massive fires to the northern part of my province, British Columbia, fed by 50,000 square miles – the size of Alabama – of trees killed by a pine beetle infestation which our winters are no longer cold enough to contain. Smoke from the fires covered the Canadian prairies hundreds of miles to the east. Shades of Russia, where unprecedented heat and conflagration have devastated forests. Merely breathing in Moscow became equivalent to smoking several cigarette packs a day. And then there’s the Gulf of Mexico, catastrophic floods in Pakistan – need one continue?

Separated from my research library and even the Internet, I must forego an armoury of academic footnotes and get to the heart of the matter. In a world beset by multiple and intersecting crises of governance, conflict, poverty, inequality and ecology, the civilizational paradigm shift required to survive into the next century includes the need to reshape the structures and ethos of public communication. That imperative invites scholars in public communication, and journalism as its most important form of story-telling, to revisit, revise and perhaps replace our intellectual priorities and our key normative concepts. In this brief essay, I examine...
three of them: objectivity, alternative media, and the democratic public sphere.

Objectivity is dead! Long live objectivity!

Notwithstanding quibbles and qualifications, many journalism educators and practitioners, in North America, at least, still regard objectivity as a hallmark of journalistic professionalism. By contrast, some critics see objectivity as a mere sham that disguises the framing of news to suit elite interests.

A nuanced understanding rejects both positions. In Sustaining Democracy? Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity, Yuezhi Zhao and I discuss objectivity as a ‘discursive regime’ with five dimensions: normative values and ideals, typical newsgathering practices, implicit epistemology (assumptions about knowledge and truth), a language for everyday talk about the news, and institutional structures which are a precondition for the regime and/or which have a vested interest in it.

The objectivity regime has contradictory origins and potential. It harbour the democratic promise of facts freely available to all, without fear or favour. But it has also come to embed practices that arguably constrain democratic participation, produce partial and ideological accounts of the world, and limit the capacity of journalism to address the planet’s multiple crises. For instance, excessive dependence on official sources gives undue weight to self-serving elites that, in some cases, escalate conflict for their own political purposes.

For years, the practice of ‘balance’ between contending elite voices stunted American public understanding of planetary crisis by giving too much credence to extra-scientific climate change deniers; it has also helped to limit public debate on US foreign policy to those who share a narrow range of assumptions. Some objectivity conventions – such as the focus on events rather than contexts, and the definition of conflicts as two-sided zero-sum games – have biased mainstream journalism towards conflict escalation, rather than towards non-violent conflict resolution.

Journalism’s objectivity regime is itself in crisis, for a variety of reasons, ranging from intensified commercial pressures and conglomerate ownership to channel proliferation and the stunning diffusion of the Internet. Yet no clear public philosophy has emerged to replace it. As an ideal, surely objectivity’s best aspects are worth preserving – its public service ethos, fact-based truth orientation, independence from vested interests, ‘serious’ civic-oriented journalism. But it needs to be institutionally re-articulated; to become one element in a pluralist media system that includes space for grassroots and multiple truths, allowing people to tell their own stories in their own voices.

The conceptual and practical shortcomings of objectivity have encouraged many people to turn to other genres of journalism, often practiced in ‘alternative’ media.

Alternative media?

In the past ten years, landmark studies by John Downing, Chris Atton, Dorothy Kidd, Clemencia Rodriguez and others have highlighted the historical, albeit underground, significance of ‘alternative’ media produced by and for marginalized communities or oppositional social movements. It is a welcome corrective in media studies, but there is a definitional ambiguity: what are alternative media alternative to? To dominant ways of making media and journalism, or to the social order in some broader sense? For example, fanzines, grassroots publications produced by amateurs outside the circuits of commercial promotion, may be alternative in the first sense; but to the extent that they ultimately endorse celebrity culture, they are not politically alternative. In the context of global crisis, it is that latter sense that should compel our attention.

Apart from its ambiguity, the dichotomy between alternative and mainstream media semantically marginalizes whatever is defined as ‘alternative’, and legitimizes corporate and state media as ‘mainstream’ – which is why Ralph Nader cautions against these terms. The dichotomy also overlooks various forms of hybridity – including the ways in which practices once considered ‘alternative’ (such as weblogs and online citizens’ journalism) are being adopted and perhaps co-opted by corporate media. And conversely, how ‘alternative’ media (like the urban weekly newspapers in many American cities that emerged during the 1960s counter-culture) are being transformed by the pressures of commercialism.

Perhaps we need to abandon the dichotomy altogether, and use the imperatives of global crisis to fashion a new definition: between media that promote genocidal/exterminist logics, versus those facilitating sustainability and justice. If carefully
applied, that reconceptualization avoids an overly determinist equation between structure and content. It allows the possibility of spaces in dominant media for different paradigms of journalism – such as Peace Journalism, an approach to conflict reporting that aims to invite society to consider and to value non-violent means of conflict resolution. In both principle and practice, Peace Journalism is relevant to both ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’ media.

Much academic work on both news objectivity and alternative media is underwritten by a political/normative commitment to the role of media in building a democratic public sphere (a concept introduced to English-language media studies via the translated work of German social theorist Jürgen Habermas). How useful is that concept for a world in crisis?

Democratic public sphere(s)? Invited to address a prestigious American school of communication in the 1990s, I spoke of the democratic deficits of ‘objective’ journalism in relation to the public sphere. One professor asked why academics keep returning to ‘boring’ concepts like citizenship and the public sphere.

I was too junior and deferential a guest to reply more than defensively. But as I approach my curmudgeonly senior years, and with thanks to Pierre Bourdieu (On Television) and John Sanbonmatsu (The Postmodern Prince), I would now invert the question: ‘Why are communication scholars so terrified of boredom? Is it because we have developed a professional culture that too often mimics the logics of commercial journalism, where intellectual baubles and novelty – however inane or inconsequential – trump the disciplined but often unglamorous elaboration and application of well-tested concepts? Where preening displays of intellectual dandyism are more highly prized than painstaking research? In which what passes for critical communication theory has become subject to the very forces of commodification and spectacularization that it once critiqued? Where pressing concerns about class inequality, for example, can be dismissed simply by labelling them as ‘old’ left, as if that were an argument?’

Yet perhaps my interlocutor was on to something. We should revisit the concepts of ‘public sphere,’ and indeed ‘democracy’ itself, not because they are boring, but to ask whether they provide adequate evaluative orientation for journalism in a world in crisis.

As a benchmark, the Habermasian concept of public sphere assumes rationality, equality, the bracketing out of private interests, a mutual commitment to finding common ground through a process of deliberation. Nancy Fraser and others have made telling critiques of that concept (many of which Habermas has accepted). It embeds a masculinist notion of rationality, and a taken-for-granted gendered distinction between private and public spheres. It ignores the ‘counter’ and minority public spheres of subordinate groups, the intrusion of social and economic inequalities into the processes of the public sphere (including the impact of ideological domination), and the conversion of public opinion into effective state policy through representative political mechanisms.

Such critics have not abandoned the concept altogether, however, and the question remains: is the separation between the public sphere model, and how public communication works in practice (arguably, dominated by commercial propaganda and the exercise of strategic communication by political elites) so great, that the model is no longer a useful guide to effective communicative practice? Is what passes for public opinion in putative democracies anything other than an artefact of polling firms, a product manufactured in isolation from processes of informed deliberation (leading Pierre Bourdieu, decades ago, to write an essay entitled ‘Public opinion does not exist’)?

Established political and economic elites, it seems, will go to any lengths, including well-financed propaganda, to defend their short-run interests, even if the logic of their policies (as Naomi Klein argues with respect to climate change) is genocidal. Consider the track record of the tobacco and oil industries in delaying or blocking remedial policy changes, at the cost of many thousands of lives. Does propaganda that deliberately falsifies scientifically established realities in order to justify predetermined and destructive ends, merit categorization as ‘communication’ and protection under legally recognized communication rights – a question examined by Aliaa Dakrouy in Communication and Human Rights?

Is the very ideal of a public sphere so unrealistic that social movements must abandon it in favour of ‘strategic communication’? To some extent, that has already happened. NGOs are
adopting the communicative strategies of dominant and commercial media and of their political opponents, tailoring messages to meet the requirements of media logic, argues Natalie Fenton in *New Media, Old News*. To what extent is that departure from democratic deliberation a necessary retreat in the face of planetary emergency?

More broadly, should social movements acquiesce in some aspects of an unjust social order, in order to achieve essential short-term reforms? Are environmental groups right to offer fawning praise to multinational corporations or right-wing governments, when they make some ameliorative gesture? Should media reform groups in the US and Canada tailor their own issues agenda, and perhaps put radical demands on the back burner, in the interests of obtaining funding from foundations, or a respectful hearing from governments?

Perhaps a two-pronged strategy is needed: on the one hand, securing short-term ameliorative reforms through using the political spaces currently available; on the other hand, designing strategies of mobilization and struggle to address the power imbalances that not only intrude upon the public sphere, but arguably constitute such public spheres as exist, like state-sponsored public broadcasting. (That has another implication for media studies: the need to abandon media-centrism, to pay adequate attention to political and economic contexts.)

**Questioning democracy deficits**

Some would go farther, to question not only the “public sphere” as a normative benchmark, but democracy itself. Environmentalist thinker James Lovelock has suggested that as in wartime, democracy may need to be suspended vis-à-vis planetary emergency – presumably in favour of some form of eco-authoritarianism. But that option is not on the political cards. In the context of contemporary global capitalism, the erosion of democratic mechanisms would likely yield “national security” dictatorships with priorities quite at odds with environmental justice and human survival.

On the other hand, from a vantage point committed to popular political participation and opposed to dictatorship, Arundhati Roy (in *Listening to Grasshoppers*) asks whether democracy, as it is currently practiced – massively expensive and manipulable periodic elections – could actually be the “endgame” of the human race. In the Indian context, it gives plebiscitary legitimacy to toxic policies of corporate predation, environmental destruction, Free Market inequalities, state promotion of inter-communal hatred, and fascistic ethnic cleansing bordering on genocide.

Without a population capable of judging its own political interests and a political culture where the needs of the other are taken into account, electoral democracy does not necessarily generate a just or sustainable civilization. British historian E.P. Thompson once noted that the most fearsome doomsday weapon is the deformed human mind. History has already shown the nightmarish outcomes of democracies of minds deformed by ongoing cultural and structural violence.

Such considerations invite caution about either endorsing or rejecting the public sphere *in toto* as a normative principle. It offers a workable benchmark for evaluating the democratic deficits of media policies and structures. But we cannot rely on political and economic elites to sit down and politely discuss the dismantling of their obscene wealth and power, even with human survival at stake. Nor (as deliberative democracy theorists rightly argue) can “popular culture,” populist politics, or electoral democracy be counted on spontaneously to generate a viable, instant alternative.

Well-organized mass social movements, using their own means of communication, are indispensable as forms of popular education as well as of mobilization. Resistance to the engines of global inequality and destruction is essential; genuinely democratic public spheres are arguably both a precondition and an outcome of that process.

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All that jazz

Cees J. Hamelink

One of great challenges of the early 21st century is the shift from ‘instrumental’ to ‘relational’ communication. Learning to communicate through music is essential in meeting this challenge. In particular education for jazz music with young children deserves more attention and more resources.

‘The world would be a better place if we were able to unselfconsciously communicate through music’

John Blacking

All living species communicate. The most general observation in Darwinian biology is that species (and their behaviours) evolve over time through successful adaptation to their environment. The key to biological evolution is the finding of solutions to adaptive problems.

It seems sensible to argue that a similar process occurs in forms of non-biological evolution, such as cultural and psychological evolution. In these forms human beings find non-genetic solutions to adaptive problems. Human survival and reproduction need knowledge. Its acquisition is an example of non-genetic adaptation to the environment. Another such adaptation is human communication.

Human communication is an evolutionary response to adaptive problems in our environment. As primates, Neanderthals and Homo Sapiens began to live in large and complex social groups, they discovered the need for [careful] interaction and reciprocity. To meet this critical need the human species developed adaptations, such as self-consciousness and language. These were – together with an interesting biological adaptation: the lowering of the larynx – the prerequisites for social communication.

However important the development of language may have been, there was a predecessor in what sometimes has been called ‘musilanguage’. It could be that this non-verbal language has actually been demonstrated to be the key communicative tool for the human being.

Usually we grant the honour of the communication tool par excellence to language, but it should not be forgotten that more often than not verbal language (with all its varieties) is rather an obstacle to human communication. To communicate really well we have to speak the same language which we often do not. However, when we speak ‘musilanguage’ we have a universally accessible tool in our hands!

Music making is found everywhere and in different ways everybody participates in it. In most cultures music making is a collective and pleasurable activity.

Exercising power through instrumental communication

Most of our daily communication diet – be it direct and interpersonal/inter group, or through channels of social and mass media – is characterized by its instrumental nature.

Instrumental speech means that the speaker uses communication in a way that serves his or her personal interests or the interests of the group the speaker belongs to. In instrumental communication the other is used as a means. The significance of the other is judged in terms of their relative usefulness in achieving ‘our’ goals. Instrumental speech is essential to the exercise of power: its function is to make the listener do and believe things that he/she would otherwise not have done or believed.

Most people – with only few exceptions – live in communities. For these communities to be sustainable people need to find ways to understand each other. Mutual understanding is not possible without ‘relational communication’. This becomes even more critical as communities through changes in global demographics evolve into multi-cultural and multi-religious communities. Lest these new communities get entangled in violent and possibly lethal conflict, the freedom of their members to engage in genuine dialogue is vitally important.

‘Relational communication’ is the essential response to the intensification of conflicts around the world between people of different origins, religious values, cultural practices and languages. It is a crucial instrument in the realization of human security. ‘Relational communication’ refers to interactions in which others are seen as unique individuals with faces, stories, experiences, in which others are goals and not instruments. Through relational commu-
Relational communication implies that people do not just talk to others but talk with each other and in this interaction feel free to say what they think and thus speak up. Relational communication also implies that people listen to each other. Not merely in the defensive sense in order to be prepared for rebuttal, but with empathy and reflexivity in order to be able to see reality from a different perspective.

Music-making leads to conviviality
‘Music has charms to soothe a savage breast, to soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak’ wrote the 17th century poet William Congreve. Music making has special qualities that can help us to learn the art of relational communication. Music has a direct impact on our emotional state of mind. Music influences behaviour and our readiness to help others is greater after listening to pleasant music. Collective music making leads to surges of endorphin within the brain which makes people friendlier disposed towards each other. Music making is also likely to release the hormone oxytocin in the brain and this stimulates social bonding.

Music is a great teacher of ‘conviviality’. The concept convivial denotes the combination of cheerfulness with helpfulness. The link is important as we know from a range of experiments in social psychology that ‘people who are happy tend to be more helpful and cooperative; they evaluate themselves and others more positively, and think more creatively’ (Mithen, 2005: 99).

Recent research by Sebastian Kirschner and Michael Tomasello (2010) finds support for the hypothesis that joint music making among 4-year old children increases subsequent spontaneous cooperative and helpful behaviour. Kirschner and Tomasello argue that group music making effectively satisfies intrinsic human needs to share emotions, experiences and activities.

In Paris one finds in the rue Saint-Jacques the École Supérieure de Musique, Danse, et d’Art Dramatique. Satie, Debussy, Albéniz and Messiaen taught there. Cole Porter studied there. This imaginative school that began as a Schola Cantorum genuinely cares for music. It renounces competition. Its basic philosophy is ‘On ne fait pas de musique contre quelqu’un’ (One does not make music against someone else) (Carhart, 2002).

This inspirational statement can be applied to communication: one does not communicate against each other but with each other. The Portuguese pianist Maria Pires practises this counsel in her music education. For her, learning to play music is an adventurous exploration rather than an effort to impress parents and teachers. Because of the competitive drive in many conservatories around the world, most musical education is fine for highly motivated and talented children, but does little to develop motivation and talent for all the others.

Pires wants her students to discover the fun in music and the love of music and discourages them from participating in contests. The competitive drive stands in the way of really listening to the music and cooperating with others. One of the grand old men of jazz music, the late Hank Jones, once said after a concert, ‘I never compete with fellow musicians, I only try to play better than I did yesterday and I do this by listening to the others, particularly the young ones.’

Music education lays the basis for ‘relational’ communication. It teaches kids to work together, to enjoy cooperation, and to listen to each other. It teaches them ‘conviviality’.

This plea for music education should be concluded with special emphasis on jazz music. More
than any other type of music, from playing jazz together in a big band kids learn the need to listen, to cooperate, to co-create, to freely express their emotions, and to take the risk of freely improvising.

Herbie Hancock – jazz pianist and one of the founders of the International Committee of Artists for Peace – recently said (in an interview with Jazz Magazine, 33 (10) 2010) ‘the core of jazz music is the dialogue, listening to each and accepting each other, it is the language to express our responsibility for our planet.’

We live on a dangerous and endangered planet and because we are the only species that makes music we have the responsibility to use this magic tool to make living on this planet meaningful. Starting with allocating more resources (as part of educational and cultural policies) to jazz education for young kids is a promising way to realize our unique human planetary responsibility!

References

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Meditation on silence

Philip Lee

‘Silence ruled this land. Out of silence mystery comes, and magic, and the delicate awareness of unreasoning things’ (Dark, 1941: 9). What place does silence have in today’s mass mediated societies and where can we still find it?

Difficult to imagine primordial silence: the stillness of pre-civilization that was not really silence, but the natural harmony of wind, rain, sea, insects and birds, in place of the relentless ‘noise pollution’ of modern life.

Today, the world spinning across the universe, with its myriad sources of sound, noise, and static, is its own messenger, its own sender, its own medium. At no time is its frail human cargo ever silent. At no time still. Perhaps that is because, as Blaise Pascal confessed in his Pensées (1670: III, 206), ‘the eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me.’ How much more, then, should we value silence and stillness amid such an unnatural cacophony?

In his discussion of silence as a medium of communication, Adam Jaworski uses Marshall McLuhan’s distinction between hot and cool media to argue that, if speech is relatively cool, silence must be even cooler. McLuhan says that, ‘a hot medium is one that extends one single sense in “high definition”... the state of being well filled with data.’ In contrast, ‘speech is a cool medium of low definition, because so little is given and so much has to be filled in by the listener’ (McLuhan, 1974: 36). Consequently, ‘silence is a medium of communication whose processing requires more cognitive effort than speech’ (Jaworski, 1993:141).

Silence is not a polar opposite to noise, but a context in which another kind of discourse takes place. That discourse may use spheres of reference such as self, knowledge, experience, relationships, and the transcendental. These are not mutually exclusive, but interactive. As Michel Foucault has argued:
‘Silence itself... is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within overall strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say’ (Foucault, 1987: 27).

This suggests that silence is more a medium than a state, a vessel rather than a condition. Silence carries, encompasses, traverses, transcends, and is a metaphor for prolonged periods of stillness that are intensely active – as a stone is inert at the macro level yet in spectacular motion at the micro level. It is a vessel of communication whose ‘contents’ must be interpreted differently, using extra-personal or extra-spatial points of reference.

Typologies of silence are quite rare. ‘Interactive silences’ together with a broad array of functions as well as the contexts in which they operate have been categorized at some length (see Bruneau, 1973; Jensen, 1973; Johannesen, 1974). A general typology of silence proposed by Saville-Troike (1985: 16-17) offers three broad categories (institutionally determined silence, group-determined silence, and individually-determined/negotiated silence) that are, in turn, divided into sub-categories: locational, ritual, membership, hierarchical, taboo, situational, normative, symbolic, interactive (socio-contextual and linguistic), and non-interactive (contemplative and inactive).

More recently, a typology of silence in social interaction has been elaborated (Kurzon, 2007) that identifies conversational silence (the silent answer to a question or the case of not participating in a conversation even when present), thematic silence (when a person speaking does not relate to a particular topic), textual silence (in which a silent person reads a particular text in silence) and situational silence (in which a group of people is silent but are not reading a text or anything at all).

Interestingly, in Kurzon’s analysis the silence of meditation is excluded from ‘situational silence’ and silence in social interaction in general because it is on the individual level and does not involve any other person. It is non-interactive silence (contemplative or meditative silence) that offers scope for self-communication:

‘Silence has many dimensions. It can be a regression and an escape, a loss of self, or it can be presence, awareness, unification, self-discovery. Negative silence blurs and confuses our identity, and we lapse into daydreams or diffuse anxieties. Positive silence pulls us together and makes us realize who we are, who we might be, and the distance between these two’ (Merton, 1979: 39).

In this definition, ‘positive silence’ becomes a propagating medium – rather like potting plant soil – in which exploration, communication, rapport, and reconciliation between self and whatever transcends self become possible. It is characterized by an interior monologue or, theologically speaking, an interior duologue, in which listening becomes paramount.

Positive silence can also be characterized by extreme anxiety. Witness the poet T. S Eliot striving to forge ‘Burnt Norton’ in *Four Quartets* (1944):

‘Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,  
Will not stay still. Shrieking voices  
Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,  
Always assail them.’

Witness the composer Mahler, striving to give adequate expression to both the worldly and otherworldly at the end of his Ninth Symphony (1911), where violins and violas interrogate silence only to receive an inaudible answer. And witness the potter who strives to coax a bowl out of an amorphous lump of clay. Is that not how Adam was fashioned – summoned from silence?

**Technology rules!**

Today’s technology oriented world seems to offer little scope for positive silence. Paradoxically, the silence of communicating is measured by the incessant babble of virtual communication and social media. A recent report shows that two thirds of the world’s Internet population are linked to a social networking or blogging site and the sector now accounts for almost 10% of all Internet
According to Internet World Stats, that's two thirds of nearly 2,000 million people worldwide, the majority of whom are in Asia and Europe. Statistics from ITU Statshot (June 2010) show that, while close to two thirds of people in the developed world now have access to the Internet, four fifths of people in the developing world do not. At the same time 90% of the world's population is now covered by a mobile cellular network. In many countries in the global South, more than half of rural households now have a mobile phone.

French philosopher Jacques Ellul was a stringent critic of what he termed *la technique* – the mindset that makes a normative claim for technological efficiency as a measure of human civilisation. He dissects this all-powerful phenomenon in many of his books, notably *La Technique ou l’enjeu du siècle* (1954) translated into English as *The Technological Society* (1964), critiquing its dehumanising and propagandising effects. Ellul asserts that autonomous technology overrides traditional human values to produce a monolithic global culture in which non-technological differences and varieties are merely superficial.

Ellul believed that the 20th century rendered the genius of technological achievement sacred, allowing its unfettered power to control industry and commerce as well as politics, education, and mass communication. Prophetically, he foresaw the convergence of communication technologies that would assist the process of subjecting human beings to an omnipotent ‘technique’, pointing out that we only judge technological phenomena using criteria obtained from technological society itself.

In other words, we have forgotten our non-technological selves and need to rediscover our identity as human beings in order to have genuine insight into technological progress and its impact on the world and be remotely in solidarity with those that the system has trampled under foot. Ellul identifies the ear rather than the eye as the point of origin of ‘technological disturbance’ – the means by which people ought to perceive the silence of infinite spaces. ‘The ear, unlike the eye, evokes mystery and renunciation.’ We have contrived a world in which people find ‘refuge in the lap of technique’ (Ellul, 1964: 379-80).

Many people have commented that, in today’s noise-filled world, the art of listening has also been lost. Listening is integral to our relationship with ourselves and others. From the perspective of self-knowledge, self-transformation, and self-realization, to listen means to open oneself to other people and to what is going on around us. It requires a silence in which what is being communicated both internally and externally can be heard without prejudice, fear, or judgment. Listening in this way is the bedrock of engaged dialogue – the kind that involves empathy and a genuine desire to hear what other people are saying and how they understand the world. It is what Adam Kahane calls ‘deep conversation’. Kahane describes four ways of talking and listening. The first is ‘downloading’, consisting of polite, socially acceptable, conventional exchanges in which people do not listen.
carefully and nothing new is explored. The second is ‘debating’, when people actively search for new information or perspectives and engage in argument.

The third is ‘reflective dialogue’, characterized by placing oneself in the circumstances of the other person, seeing and listening to oneself through the eyes and ears of the other. The fourth and most powerful is ‘generative dialogue’ in which two or more people experience a sense of common purpose and are fully engaged with what is taking place and its potential for change (Kahane, 2004). It is this kind of engaged dialogue that is most democratic, in which everyone takes part on an equal footing and everyone is listened to.

Silence is a constitutive element of both deep conversation and engaged dialogue. As philosopher Max Picard wrote in *The World of Silence*, whenever two people are in conversation, a third is always present: Silence is listening. In this rather mystical view:

‘That is what gives breadth to a conversation: when the words are not moving merely within the narrow space occupied by the two speakers, but come from afar, from the place where silence is listening. That gives the words a new fullness. But not only that: the words are spoken as if it were from the silence, from that third person, and the listener receives more than the speaker alone is able to give’ (Picard, 1988: 25).

Lamenting the relegation of silence, Picard goes on to observe that there are no longer any silent people in the world, and no difference between the silent and the speaking person, only between the speaking and the non-speaking person. And because there are no silent people, there are no longer any listeners. People are incapable of listening and can no longer tell a story, ‘for listening and true story-telling belong together: they are a unity’ (Picard, 1988: 157).

The world will never return to the silence of its primordial past. The ability to vocalise and speak that led to the miracles of language, writing, and a myriad technologies of communication, has also resulted in an ambient noise that engulfs the silence and stillness that the soul needs to find itself. As Michael Traber (1982) eloquently put it:

‘Genuine human silence is more than the mere absence of noise, more than the withholding of the word, and more than a stretch of time without perforation by sound. Silence is a phenomenon of its own. It creates the word, and the word returns to it. Its echo is music and poetry. Its space embraces self, the other, and God.’

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Media theories can be confusing, especially when some aspects of the media’s role in a society are emphasized more than others in media activism. Take the media and democratization agenda which is the buzz in Africa today. The democratization wave of the late 1980s and 1990s in the world and Africa has created in African media studies an academic research agenda on media and democracy, while human rights, freedom of expression and media activists use the media-democracy paradigm to spread liberal democratic ideas.

We should be mindful, as James Curran points out, that understanding the democratic system and liberal thinking about the role of the media is extremely complex and cannot be based on an understanding of polity developed in the 18th century upon which German political theorist Jürgen Habermas based his normative model of the media and the public sphere (Curran, 2002: 233).

Curran argues that in the 21st century people are represented primarily through political parties, interest groups and the myriad structures of civil society. These (rather than individual citizens represented by the media) are the principal building blocks of contemporary liberal democracy.

A view of the democratic role of the media needs to be related, in other words, to the collective and institutional forms of the modern political system. And the impact of globalization must also be factored into the mix (Curran, 2002: 234).

But without getting too bogged down in theoretical and ideological arguments about the media-democracy paradigm, as Nkosi Ndlela points out:

‘Democratization, therefore, brought new hopes for the revitalization of the mass media. Popular support for democracy in Africa hinged on the promises it was expected to fulfil, such as increased freedom and improved livelihoods. This instrumental view of democracy also extended to the mass media and their expected roles in the democratization processes across sub-Saharan Africa...

‘...The media and democracy research strand takes an instrumental view that the mass media, if properly constituted, can promote both democracy and development’ (Ndlela, 2009).

I would imagine that it is easy to figure out what is meant by a ‘properly constituted’ mass media. Broadly, and among other things, it means self-regulation; working in an environment where respect for freedom of expression and other political and civil liberties is the norm; where laws and the economic climate give rise to pluralism and diversity in both the print and broadcast sector; and where access to information is not hindered.

No problem there. But I wonder how far the media-democracy paradigm in Southern Africa gets deeper into elements of journalism such as the media’s ‘first loyalty is to the citizens’ (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001), or the media working in the interests of a general public that includes many publics?

Role of media in Southern Africa

‘Popular support’ for democratic dispensations in Africa (which reads to me as support from a large majority of the general population and not just from elites, liberal intellectuals and the civil society sector) and the media’s loyalty to citizens and carrying out their media roles daily in the publics’ interests, are key elements that should be developed in any media-democracy discussion in Southern Africa and not glibly paid lip-service to.

While it sounds ‘politically correct’ when challenged to remember the public for an editor to
suggest holding media discussions and seminars in venues closer to the people, instead of in the cream of the crop hotels in cities, I believe the public interest component of the media-democracy theory goes far deeper, and if critically looked at, might put a spotlight on the media that does not show them in the most favourable light.

An unfettered and independent press, liberal theorists have argued, is essential to the process of democratization by contributing towards the right of freedom of expression, thought and conscience, strengthening the responsiveness and accountability of governments to all citizens, and providing a pluralistic platform and channel of political expression for a multiplicity of groups and interests – emphasis added (Norris, 2009).

The role of the news media as civic forum is not a tenet I have heard strongly pushed in activism for a free and independent media in Southern Africa. And it is in this role, among all the others, that activism for more voices and perspectives in the media other than those of just men, or those in positions of power and formal authority, is securely grounded.

In their civic forum role, Harvard lecturer Pippa Norris says a free press can strengthen the public sphere by mediating between citizens and the state, facilitating debate about the major issues of the day, and informing the public about their leaders.

And further, quoting from the works of Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks, Norris points out what I see as a significant point which media activism does not quite capture well in our region:

‘If the channels of communication reflect the social and cultural pluralism within each society, in a fair and impartial balance, then multiple interests and voices are heard in public deliberation’ (Norris, 2009).

Norris says this role is particularly important during election campaigns, because the media in their tone and coverage should be open to a plurality of political viewpoints and parties. Yes, this is imperative. But what about the media’s civic forum role, when the noise of elections has died down?

Is there still a clamour by the media and media activists themselves in Southern Africa for media to play its critical civic forum role and ensure that through objective methods used to report on issues and events, multiples interests and voices are heard in and through the media?

The gravitational pull of power
A wide breadth of research on gender in the media in Southern Africa has opened a can of worms on the civic forum role of the media and its importance to democracy. Why? Because this research largely shows that the media gravitate towards power and it is those in power and former authority who speak in and through the media in Southern Africa.

Furthermore, these studies reflect unfavourably on media professional standards. Norris notes that it is not only state ownership, private oligopolies and crony capitalism coupled with legal policies which restrict critical reporting and limit the role of the media in its civic forum and watchdog roles. Uneven journalistic standards also limit this role.

One indicator of journalistic standards is the use of multiple and diverse sources and perspectives when reporting on events and issues in the media. The latest Gender and Media Progress Study (GMPS) to be launched in October (2010) by Gender Links, an NGO based in South Africa that works regionally in the areas of gender and governance, gender and the media, and gender justice, found that in print and broadcast media monitored in 14 Southern African countries, 67% of the 33,265 media stories monitored were singled-sourced stories (Taking Stock, 2010). This high preponderance of single-sourced stories casts a shadow on media professionalism.

As for who speaks in the media or whether the regional media do play a civic forum role by reflecting multiple interests and voices, the GMPS 2010 found that women who comprise about 52% of the region’s population and who are the majority of the citizens in a large majority of Southern African countries are only 19% of those who speak in the media stories monitored (Taking Stock, 2010).

Yes, the media have a role to play in democracy. But it is also important that we see the development of democratic media systems that do not just hammer away at watchdog and other pivotal roles, while giving least attention to media roles that are vested in empowering citizens and ensuring that their views and interests are reflected.

While staying vigilant in scrutinising governments and centres of power, the media should at
the same time create the conditions for real societal agreement or compromise based on open discussion of differences rather than a contrived consensus based on elite dominance (Curran, 2002: 247). Media activism to ensure Southern African countries have legal environments conducive to free and independent media, access to information, and freedom of expression for all citizens and the media should continue. This is critical. But such activism needs to be strengthened through initiatives that simultaneously focus on democratizing the media.

This entails a review of news values so that prominence and politics alone do not become the primary focus of the news agenda; more rigour in how we do our work to ensure that the single-sourced story becomes a thing of the past even when deadlines are tight; more stories about issues and events that have impact on people’s lives, taking into account the difference the impact will have depending on sex, age, class, education, among other variables; far more rigour in the verification of facts; and a greater effort to rid our newsrooms of sexist and other undemocratic tendencies, to name but a few. The media also need to build a bridge to the various publics, not just to those who read, listen and watch media daily, but more so to those who have decided to give up on media in despair.

At a recent talk in Zimbabwe on Media and Transitional Justice sponsored by the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ), the media’s self-regulatory body, South African journalist, media trainer and one of the members of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Hugh Lewin, discussed the strength of media in which the public believes it has a stake. He noted that, ‘As long as people themselves do not trust the media and the media do not reflect their reality, they (the public) will not invest in defending the media.’

Lewin added that, in times when governments make overtures towards introducing laws that will curtail press freedom as many governments in Southern Africa are trying to do, ‘The media cannot be transformed until every citizen believes they have a stake in owning the media.’

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World Social Forum (WSF) 2011
Resistance and struggle of African peoples

The World Social Forum returns to Africa in 2011. After Nairobi (Kenya), the Senegalese capital Dakar will host the main programme 6-11 February 2011.

Focusing on the history of resistance and struggle of African peoples, the 2011 WSF will focus on the interface with global struggles and strategies that are common to those of Africa, the South and the rest of the world.

The Cheik Anta Dioup University campus will be the main venue of the Forum. With rooms, conference rooms and open spaces for hosting activities and/or thematic tents, International Youth Camp and workshops.

It will be possible to register online and locally. Local registration is intended for those with little or no Internet connection and online payment via credit card – the registration system is being developed to work with this payment means only. Registration fees will vary according to geopolitical social group criteria, aiming to guarantee the plurality of participants.

Creating independent news media

Robert W. McChesney

There are a number of foundational areas for research in communication in the coming generation. They all relate, in my mind, to structural communication policy battles in the immediate future. The outcome of these policy debates will go a long way toward shaping the direction our species goes in the coming generations.

We still know too little about the Internet and the effects of digital communication upon not only our media systems, but our brains, our culture, our economy and our politics. Likewise, we still have a remarkably underdeveloped understanding of advertising and commercialism, despite their omnipresence in our lives.

We know, too, far too little about the environmental effects of communication technology, and the broader role of communication in the climate crisis before us. I could continue in this vein, and the other articles in this journal touch on many of them.

But the central issue before communication scholars for the immediate future, and until it is satisfactorily resolved, is the research necessary to enact policies to create viable independent news media; i.e. to institutions necessary to produce journalism for a free and self-governing society. It is most important because without it, all other issues fall by the wayside.

To employ an analogy from economics, independent news media are the ‘capital goods’ of a free society; without them the ‘consumer goods’ of freedom and self-government cannot be produced. A credible free press means a system that:

- Provides a range of informed opinion on the key issues of the day; can ferret out truth from lies, so liars cannot act with impunity and citizens can have some confidence in the system;
- Does not have the range of legitimate stories and opinions determined by what those in political or business power believe is legitimate;
- Provides an early warning system for major issues so they can be recognized and addressed peacefully and at a lower cost than would be the case otherwise;
- Regards the journalism needs of all people, even...no especially...poor people, to be equal and equally important.

Each medium need not do all of this, but the system as a whole must make this a reasonable expectation.

Creating a viable free press has emerged as a central issue because of the rapid disintegration of the commercial news media system. It is a worldwide phenomenon, but it seems most acute in the United States, at least to this American observer.

Propaganda and spin

In short, research demonstrates that the number of paid working journalists in most American communities has plummeted since the high point some two decades ago. In virtually every city examined there are never as many as half the number of journalists as there were in the late 1980s, and this does not even account for sometimes significant population growth. It is only going to get worse, possibly much worse, in the visible future.

Large sections of public life are no longer covered are only barely covered. The criteria listed above for a free press are in a shambles. The ratio of public relations workers to working journalists has gone from around 1:1 in 1960 to nearly 4:1 today. At current rates it will likely be 6:1 or 7:1 in less than a decade. Research demonstrates that what ‘news’ does exist comes increasingly from ‘official sources’ or press releases.

We are in the Golden Age of Propaganda and Spin. Journalism as we have known it is basically dead. We are entering uncharted waters, and we have reasons to fear that our societies may drown.

An entire generation of scholars who have been studying news media and media effects need to scrap their basic assumptions and start from square one.

The Internet figures in any discussion of the cri-
sis in journalism in two ways. First, many observers and scholars hold the Internet responsible for disrupting the business models of news media, and all media for that matter. The Internet made it difficult to sell traditional media products to consumers, and undermined advertising, which historically provides the lion’s share of revenues that support U.S. journalism. It effectively ended classified advertising for American newspapers, a crushing blow.

Advertisers never were interested in supporting journalism per se, they did so because it was the only effective way to accomplish their commercial objectives. Now that the Internet and the digital revolution are here, advertising has numerous better options, and news media hold no special allure. No advertising... and not much journalism. Moreover, with balance of power shifting decisively to advertisers, those news media seeking ad dollars find much greater pressure to compromise their integrity.

Although the Internet has done considerable damage to commercial news media, and would have forced a reckoning at some point, a great deal more research needs to go into the business of journalism. The fact is that U.S. commercial news media were shedding editorial jobs and closing bureaus for two decades, during periods of record profits and long before Google even existed. In my view, a more fruitful analysis looks at the tensions between commercialism and journalism, and understands the rise and fall (and distinct limitations) of professional journalism in this context.

Second, with no sense of irony, many of the same people who attribute the crisis of journalism to the Internet argue that there are no grounds for concern because the Internet will spawn a new news media system, one probably far superior to what it has just destroyed. We need to better understand how the Internet can revolutionize and improve journalism and politics in general, because the potential is enormous. But it is not guaranteed by the technology. The evidence regarding journalism is now clear: the Internet has created almost no paying jobs doing journalism compared to the tens of thousands that have been lost. On its own, the Internet cannot work any magic. Journalism requires revenues, institutions, people getting paid. That isn’t happening on the Internet and there are no reasons to expect that it will.

The collapse of journalism is spawning a thoroughgoing reappraisal of U.S. news media historically as well as a renewed interest in the actual nature of government-news media relations since 1776. It is some of the most promising research going. What is exciting about this new wave of research is that it is coming from historians, legal scholars, and economists, and is finding a striking degree of common ground. It is the type of research that needs guidance from communication programs, because they are best suited for interdisciplinary approaches, and because their first concern is always media.

In a nutshell, this research demonstrates that journalism has many attributes of a classic public good, and having people purchase news media has never come anywhere near providing sufficient resources for a credible free press. The U.S. news media have relied upon some combination of government subsidies or advertising to exist. There is a rich history of massive government direct and indirect subsidies of U.S. journalism going back to the nation’s founding, and these subsidies have only very rarely involved censorship over content.

Indeed, the influence of corporate owners and advertisers over the content of the news has been far greater by any accounting. With the collapse of the commercial system, the logic suggests that if we are going to have a viable press system it will require large public subsidies and our task therefore is to devise subsidies that protect and promote democratic values.

Creating independent, accountable and competitive news media
The task before us is to continue this research, historically and internationally. We need hard and detailed studies of public and community media, of media markets, of alternative institutional structures, and much else. We need to understand how the digital revolution can dramatically assist and improve, possibly even revolutionize, journalism. The goal must be to determine the structures and subsidies necessary to create independent, accountable and competitive news media. There are not going to be perfect solutions, but some ideas will be much better than others. And almost anything will be better than nothing.

The crisis in journalism is occurring at a perilous historical moment. The global capitalist economy is stagnant, and even establishment figures warn that we are entering an era of very slow growth,
crumbling infrastructure, declining social services, falling wages, growing inequality, and high unemployment. Likewise the environment crisis is getting ever more severe, as the public policy response has been tepid, if not tragically pathetic. It too has increasing social and economic costs.

Too many sections of the world are at war and humanity possesses a stockpile of unimaginably powerful weapons that can obliterate our species if not all of life in a matter of days, even hours. By any reckoning we are entering a politically turbulent period, and the need for credible journalism has never been greater. Its absence all but assures greater corruption and outcomes to the pressing political issues of our times that will be less than optimal.

We often pronounce the importance of a viable free press system for the existence of a truly democratic political system. What is every bit as important is the converse: journalism, as defined in this essay and understood by most conventional assessments, requires democracy every bit as much as democracy requires journalism if it is to prosper. Journalism is not agnostic on the question of democracy; its fate hangs in the balance. So journalism and communication more broadly are in the middle of the political turmoil of our times.

In these times people are going to be searching, at times desperately, for alternatives to the capitalist status quo. There is a range of alternatives, and I suspect many new options not yet in existence, with some being more democratic and humane, and others tending toward more authoritarian and illiberal outcomes. And here there is an important new area of research and participation for communication scholars.

For much of the 20th century, the major post-capitalist alternative was the one-party communist regime, typified by the Soviet Union. Whatever the benefits of these societies in terms of economic development, health care and social services, they almost uniformly had dreadful press systems and deplorable records concerning civil liberties and democratic practices. Allowing for exceptions and variations, they were deadened societies, often police states, which paid propagandistic lip service to human liberation.

The communist rulers loudly proclaimed this was socialism and the only alternative to capitalism, and the western leaders and pundits happily agreed. It was a marriage of convenience. Given that choice, most people in the world understandably preferred capitalist democracy. It has contributed to the great demoralization of our times, that there is no way out.

Now that we have some distance from the defunct and discredited communist era, we can see that the matter of socialist alternatives has a much richer and democratic history than the Cold War typology countenanced. Prior to the Soviet era, and alongside the Soviet era, socialist movements regarded themselves as extending the promise of democracy beyond the limitations imposed by capitalism, and their practices bore this out. This is the rich tradition that is re-emerging in the world today, particularly in Latin America, but it may well serve as a harbinger.

For communication scholars, there is a great deal to be learned in the Venezuelas and Bolivias and Ecudors of the world. I would theorize that we should pay particular attention to the media systems that emerge in these democratic nations with popular governments critical of global capitalism and domestic inequality. Most of them are wrestling with traditional commercial news media owned by the wealthiest families and having a singular hostility to anything that threatens their interests. These traditional media can become a major barrier to democracy and significant conduits of propaganda. If the response of new popular regimes is to simply repress the old media and replace it with state or party organs, I think it fair to say that the democratic promise of these regimes will be compromised, even terminated.

If, on the other hand, these popular governments institute genuine decently funded community and independent media, not under the thumb of the state, we may begin to see the contours of something truly revolutionary: a genuinely democratic public sphere. But it will not be easy and there are going to be countless problems and issues along the way. Many nations without necessarily sympathetic national governments will see their own experiments at the local level or on a smaller scale. It is where our eyes belong. We have much to learn, and to teach. More than we can imagine rides on the outcome.

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Communication and the power of performance

Clemencia Rodríguez

Since leaving my native Colombia in 1988 to join Ohio University’s Communication and Development Masters Program, the field of communication and social change (CfSC) has come a long way. Back then, our readings, discussions, and debates centered on a strong critique of modernization theory and notions of ‘development,’ understood as economic growth. Today, a totally different perspective is in order.

In 1988, our field of vision was framed by two clearly opposed paradigms; on one side we had the so-called ‘dominant paradigm,’ driven by notions of development and the use of communication and media to persuade audiences to change or adopt behaviors, consumer patterns, health habits, and technology use.

On the other side, we saw an ‘alternative paradigm,’ constituting a strongly politicized field with its own epistemology, research methods, theories, and modes of intervention driven by the need to improve the quality of life of marginalized communities in the Global South. Instead of using communication and media as tools of persuasion, this paradigm would employ communication and media to promote grassroots participation in dynamic public spheres where collective decision-making shapes local futures.

Looking back more than twenty years later, I feel we allowed this polarized debate to consume too much of our energy and time, at the expense of other urgent matters. We have neglected key research and intervention areas which have the potential to bring the field of CfSC into more exciting and promising realms.

In other words, what we see today as pioneering ideas could and should be the shared, almost taken-for-granted foundations of our field. One of these pioneering ideas is the notion of communication as performance. Let me explain.

Community radio in northern Colombia

Since 2004 my fieldwork has taken me back to my native Colombia, where I’ve conducted several research studies on the role that community media play in communities caught in the cross-fire between various armed groups, including leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries, drug traffickers, and the army. For example, I had the privilege to witness the ways in which AREDMAG, a community radio network comprised of 15 radio stations in Magdalena Medio, strengthens solidarity, peace, and non-violent conflict resolution in a region ravaged by armed conflict, where massacres, political assassinations, torture, disappearance, and forced displacement have eroded social fabrics.

The Colombian armed conflict is representative of most violent conflicts around the world today. In these contemporary conflicts, we don’t see two formal armies battling each other, but rather antagonistic armed groups fighting for control of people and territory. These armed groups make people’s physical, social, and cultural space their battle ground, thereby permeating and eroding the social cohesion of local communities with militaristic logics. The result is the normalization of mistrust, isolation, and aggressive behaviors in everyday life, including violent conflict resolution. So, what do AREDMAG’s radio stations do to resist this erosion?

The stations could opt for a persuasion/social influence approach, designing and disseminating media campaigns about non-violent conflict resolution. Yet, in all my years of fieldwork in Magdalena Medio, I never witnessed the stations being used in this manner. The AREDMAG network understands that attempting to persuade people with a message that contradicts their daily lives and experiences would be a waste of time, energy, and resources. How could a radio campaign persuade anyone to manage their interpersonal conflict non-violently when everything else in their environment tells them that what makes sense, what
is normal, legitimate, and efficient, is to solve interpersonal conflict with aggression and violence?

Alternately, the stations could employ a participatory approach, opening the microphones and asking people to voice their ideas, feelings, and opinions about the best ways to manage interpersonal conflict. However, in this region people have had to co-exist with armed groups for more than forty years. In this setting, the use of force and violent conflict resolution have been 'injected' into daily life and normalized and legitimized by armed groups among civilians.

In this context who will speak out on radio with an alternative voice? How legitimate and reasonable can alternative voices be in such a context? How credible can it be to speak peace when everything the community sees and experiences legitimates violence as the only efficient way to survive and meet basic needs? When conveying fear to others around is the only known and proven way to get respect? To obtain respect for one's basic rights?

In Magdalena Medio, where neither a persuasion/social influence approach, nor a participatory approach are viable, AREDMAG's community radio stations engage in what I will call a 'performance approach.' What follows is one of many great lessons about communication and social change that I learned from Colombian community media leaders.

In Magdalena Medio, a place where impunity and corruption run rampant, and state institutions are so weak they cannot guarantee the rule of law, tensions over land tenure, a community celebration, or the use of public space can easily turn into violent episodes. One of my respondents, a long time radio producer, explained how the local community radio station is used as a tool to mediate and help solve a conflict:

Reclaiming a public space
I am going to talk about a situation that happened in our municipality that had to do with the use of a public space. There was a time when the main park in our town resembled a Persian market more than a park. Little by little it filled with street vendors and their booths until the park was nothing more than hanging clothes and trinkets everywhere... a hullabaloo. When people arrived by boat in Puerto Wilches, they really could not see that we had a park, all they could see were multicoloured ropes from which dozens of clothes for sale hung. That's when the conflict began, because we [the station] began a campaign to recover the park as a public space.

We started talking to the municipal authorities and trying to negotiate between the two parties. On one side were the people who used the park to make a living selling stuff, and they have the right to work, but on the other side were the people of the community who wanted to re-claim the park as a public space. So we looked at all that, and started promoting a dialogue between all the parties involved, and today I can say with pride that we have a proper park in Puerto Wilches. The park has been re-appropriated by the community.

This was a very significant moment for us at the station because we triggered the whole thing, and worked very closely with the vendors, trying to raise their awareness of the need for public spaces, and then we began working with the municipal authorities trying to find a solution to the problem. The solution was that the vendors were given a place they remodelled as their own commercial center; the municipal government gave them a facility and together they re-conditioned it and now all of us from Puerto Wilches can say that we have our park, a public space for our leisure and enjoyment.

The station cultivated a space for non-violent conflict resolution and encouraged the parties in conflict and the listeners to find a peaceful resolution to their dispute. The technology of radio itself played a significant role because it forced the parties in conflict to face not only their opponents, but also the entire community. This case, in which the radio station involved the community in a process of mediation, can be examined as an example of communication as performance.

The medium did not try to transmit mediation skills or persuade people of the value of mediation. Instead, the radio station designed a communication process where media producers, participants, and their audiences could actually experience mediation. Participants were 'subjected' to peace, and made to feel peace. Rather than being told about the virtues of peace, all those participating in the performance of peace were moved (pushed?) to an existential place where they actually experienced what living in a peaceful society feels like.

This type of performance, which 'subjects' people to peace, is crucial because, as anthropolo-
gist of war Carolyn Nordstrom reminds us, violence does not disappear when peace accords are signed (Nordstrom, 2004: 179-180). Violence lives in the daily behaviours and practices of all those who have learned it from war. And in the same way we learn violence, we will have to learn peace.

As media for social change, AREDMAG’s community radio stations trigger communication performances that encourage people to explore alternative behaviours and attitudes, different from the familiar and taken-for-granted. The radio stations act as designers and implementers of communication performances that instigate many different types of participation.

The mediation performance described above includes participants as radio producers, in-studio direct participants, call-in participants, and listeners. The performance involved many people who all, in differing capacities, shared the same experience of things being done differently. The performance allowed participants to experience how different their social fabric could be if conflict was managed in non-violent ways.

Performance as a tool for social change
This is where I believe that we, as so-called ‘experts’ in the field of CfSC, missed the boat. Maybe the angry debates between the development/persuasion/social influence approach versus the alternative/participation approach distracted us too much. Maybe the traditional communication model’s linear simplicity (sender-message-channel-receiver), learned in the kindergarten of communication scholarship, made us blind and unable to understand highly complex communication processes not easily tamed by horizontal and vertical arrows.

The potential of performance to stir people into being, doing, or thinking differently is ten times that of either persuasion or participation. In performance, communication blossoms into its full potential as a tool for social change.

Colombian community media leaders in my research sites demonstrate an acute awareness of this. They have become exceptional designers of collective performances using a variety of media technologies (radio, internet, video, cable television, digital photography, blogging, and a wide variety of combinations which result in fascinating cases of media convergence). These brilliant community communicators know their communities well, navigating local cultures with ease, and possessing a sense of place that resembles an intense love affair with the voices, knowledges, languages, characters, and talents in their communities.

They know that the raw material for their performances lie somewhere in the social and cultural fabric of their communities. They are always attentive to situations with media potential to become powerful performances; anything happening in the community, special events, local elections, community conflicts, government initiatives, price increases in public utilities, can stir a media performance. Including a complex mesh of interpersonal, group, and mediated communication processes, these performances draw participants in, involve different community sectors, trigger collective processes that transform social reality. It is communication that goes well beyond transmitting messages or expressing reality. It is communication at its best; communication that moves and shapes reality.

During my fieldwork I was able to witness how Colombian citizens’ media design many different types of performances that subject participants to specific experiences. I saw unarmed communities overcoming the fear and uncertainty imposed by the war; resisting the disintegration of public spaces and life-worlds; experiencing peace; re-con structing eroded social bonds and solidarities; and experimenting with non-violent conflict resolution. Ultimately, these media performances pushed people to consider alternative interpretations of reality, and alternative behaviours, attitudes, opinions.

Performance scholars have written about this type of communication processes for a long time. However, in the field of CfSC, we have paid little attention. Performance scholars observe the power of performance to bring new realities into existence, and problematize traditional epistemologies that view language as a mere expression of reality. In the field of CfSC, we need to explore further how reality, language, identity, and power interact in performance.

Defined as ‘the experience of becoming’ (Conquergood 1998), performances activate change and ‘are not only a reflection of what we are, they also shape and direct who we are and what we can become’ (Madison 2005, 154).

Performance scholar Victor Turner theorized the idea of liminality, a moment triggered by performance...
when social conventions and structures are suspended, opening the potentiality for new alternatives:

‘a realm of pure possibility, a temporary breach of structure whereby the familiar may be stripped of certitude and the normative unhinged, an interlude wherein conventional social, economic, and political life may be transcended’ (St John 2008, 5).

Performance allows a collectivity to look at itself as in a ‘hall of mirrors’ (Turner, 1982: 105). Madison describes the self-reflexive potential of performance: ‘When we perform and witness cultural performances, we often come to realize truths about ourselves and our world that we cannot realize in our day-to-day existence’ (Madison 2005, 154).

Performance can open communication spaces that nurture transgression and boundary-crossing, highlighting the power of the transformative over the normative (Conquergood, 1995, 1998). The sky is the limit when considering the research and intervention potential of performance in the field of CfSC. ■

References

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On the journey of concepts

Pradip N. Thomas

An urgent requirement today is a global analysis of the journey and translation of concepts that we often take for granted. Most readers of Media Development, I am sure, support concepts such as the public sphere and communication rights and, with few exceptions, accept the universal validity of such concepts. For the most part, the concepts that we use and, I dare say, abuse, have been generated in so-called Western contexts, from within the rarefied environments of theory and from their application by Western scholars in different parts of the world.

Civil society, the public sphere, the commons, democracy and radical democracy, communication rights have each, in their own right, and in the main, evolved in Western contexts and have contributed to a larger understanding of the possibilities of human freedom. The tremendous energies encapsulated in the concept of the public sphere have been unleashed via policy and practice and we are now better aware that the public sphere is a vital and vitalising aspect of deep democracy. Sevanti Ninan’s (2007) insightful book Headlines from the Heartland: Reinventing the Hindi Public Sphere is just one example of the globalisation of the concept of the public sphere, its validation in context and its translation across cultures.

As I get older and perhaps not wiser, I have become aware that ‘translation’ is not always an easy process and that the journey of a concept from the West to the rest is conditioned by the concept’s ‘ca-ché’ as much as by its overall political economy. My
colleague Eric Louw has argued that Pax Americana was achieved via a globalisation of the very concept of modernisation that was in itself founded on the primacy of the individual and the market. He has argued that modernisation’s cachet held a lot of appeal for the new governing elites in the developing world who, after having been marginalised by the experience of colonialism, wanted to experience the ‘re-enchantment’ promised by modernisation.

To a large extent nationalist leaders and intellectual elites played an important part in communicating the benefits of independent growth to the masses and securing the consensus that was needed to nationalise such projects. With the benefit of hindsight, we now recognise the successes of modernisation as well as its failures. Failed states litter the world while we continue to rather doggedly believe in the efficacy of democracy as the only road to salvation in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan that have been paralysed by war, which, in the case of Iraq, is over two decades old.

**Global laboratories of ideas**

Civil society, a term used to describe that space between the state and the market made up of the citizenry, is a key conduit today for the global flows of concepts such as the public sphere. New social movements remain among the most important global laboratories for experiments with democracy, and ideas related to feminism, environmentalism and human rights have travelled via new social movements to the rest of the world. Indeed many of these concepts have now become truly ecumenical and the state and the private sector now embrace words terms such as ‘social responsibility’, ‘transparency’, ‘accountability’, ‘participation’.

The aid industry too has played an important role in globalising these concepts, often as ‘conditionalities’ linked to aid. These efforts have often been accompanied by a belief in the ‘Holy Grail’ of policy as the objective of global advocacy and yet, as we have seen in situations around the world, the real challenge lies in the translation of policy into workable practices. Global civil society probably did not even remotely factor in the possibility of including various war lords and the Taliban in democratic decision-making processes in Afghanistan. Western feminists have only now begun to recognise, some rather grudgingly, that the women’s movement in other parts of the world will take on local characteristics and be shaped as much by tradition as by new ideas of emancipation.

These realities point to the fact that ideas are not sacrosanct, that concepts such as the public sphere need to be presented in kernel form rather than as a finished product and that for these concepts to be successfully adapted, they need to be filled in with local goodness. I am not suggesting that such concepts have nothing to offer but their kernel, but rather that the way in which human freedoms are conceived, and made sense of, are often based on the local politics of possibility.

The Report ‘State of Democracy in South Asia’ (2006), brought out by the Delhi-based Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, reiterates the very different nature of experiences and expectations of democracy in South Asia:

‘The most common association citizens have with the idea of democracy is “freedom”. A closer look, however, brings out the differences between the dominant understandings of democracy as freedom. For one, the language of freedom is not used equally by all sections of society: the elite, the more educated and the better-off tend to be more enthusiastic about ‘freedom’ than those at the lower end of the social hierarchy. Also, while people associate democracy with freedom, they do not necessarily emphasise freedom over democracy’s other attributes. When forced to choose the most salient feature of democracy, only six percent of respondents region-wide picked up the classical virtue of freedom of expression. But most significantly, those who did mention freedom rarely understood it in the classical, negative sense of the absence of constraints imposed by the state or society. They would rather the state play a greater role in the provision of public goods than view it as a source of threat to their liberty. Freedom is understood by ordinary citizens in a wider and positive sense that includes political freedom but extends to freedom from want’ (Himal South Asia, 2007).

The issue of ‘identity’ which has been a key con-
cept in cultural studies and new social movement theory is, in the light of the findings from this study in South Asia, not the most vexing problem in South Asia. Freedom from want is.

**Failure to address people’s aspirations**

One way to understand the rise of Maoist movements in the South Asian sub-continent is the failure of ‘translation’, the inability of the state and civil society to provide options that extend human freedoms in line with people’s aspirations. A case in point is the rise of Maoism in Nepal, a country that has been overrun with every shade of aid organisation imaginable. Kathmandu Valley is the home of the aid industry in Nepal.

The fact that Maoism has become an established reality in that part of the world suggests that imported concepts and practices of development simply have not made a difference in the lives of most people in that country. So, one can argue that this failure of development is also a failure of some of its accompanying concepts that simply did not take root because little effort was made to ‘translate’ these concepts into local reality.

As Seira Tamang (2003: 1) has observed in a well-argued article on civil society in Nepal:

‘…this constant reiteration that civil society is the solution to all of Nepal’s ills does little to clarify the nature and potential of democratic space in Nepal. Instead, civil society and other associated terms in donor liturgy – “democracy”, “development”, “empowerment”, “gender” – are deployed in simplified, sanitised and circumscribed forms… shorn of their “particular political and economic histories, these privileged discourses are circulated as transparent and free-floating normative orders.’

This critique of civil society from Nepal needs to be treated with all the respect that it deserves because that country, despite its attractiveness to a variety of international donors, foreign funds and technological transfers, continues to have major problems with poverty and is, of course, home to a successful Maoist movement.

One of the strengths of human beings is that there is, at all times, great uncertainty in the ways they make sense of concepts that are often given to them as a ‘solution’ to their many problems. The public sphere that is evolving in rural India is very different from the bourgeois public sphere that Habermas described in his classic book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. It is different because what we are seeing is not one public sphere but many – as women and Dalits as well as Brahmins shape environments in which all Voices matter.

It is also different because what we are seeing is a public sphere that is both evolving and being reclaimed by various communities who had been silenced by the juggernaut of Development that was lopsided, corrupt, non-transparent. It is also different because the freedoms that are ultimately at the very heart of the public sphere are differently conceived of and enjoyed. The validation of Voice that affirms respect and self-respect is the meaning of freedom for communities who have traditionally been on the margins.

**Empowerment – the missing factor in development practice**

Perhaps the most problematic area in communications today is in development communications practice where there is a plethora of concepts such as ‘participatory development’, ‘participatory evaluation and assessment’ and the like that have been completely eviscerated of any critical content whatsoever. The participation that is routinely highlighted in agency-based communications programs is the nominal participation of stakeholders in behavioural change communications (BCC). These concepts are now embedded in communication development practice templates and the operationalisation of these templates merely reinforces the dominant paradigm of communications.

In other words what we are seeing in many ‘agency’ projects throughout the world is an instrumentalist use of concepts that fit squarely into administrative agendas. While matrix rankings and log frames may have their benefits, a focus on the minutiae of outputs and outcomes entirely misses the point of participatory development – empowerment, the validation of Voice, and the strengthening of local capacities. How to account for these types of change is not a priority. Rather, it is on the assessment of techniques and their efficacy.

To put it mildly, great damage has been done
by behavioural change communication specialists who have contributed to the routinisation of concepts such as participation. This is one reason why people in the field tend to be sceptical of new ideas. Many have been tried out before and have been found wanting. Wendy Quarry and Ricardo Ramirez (2009:40-41) in their eminently readable book Communication for Another Development: Listening before telling describe a diagram that Ricardo drew with ‘planners’ on the one side and ‘searchers’ on the other. The planners

‘...are the people believing in the value of log frames, results-based management and all other trappings of the development world. Technocrats believe it is possible to measure change in a linear manner. They are accountable upwards. They are mostly concerned with the disbursement of funds. They are apt to rely on products (other than process). In communication terms they would be ‘tellers’ rather than listeners. For them communication is about telling people what to do and about changing behaviour.’

In a review of the book by Quarry and Ramirez, the well-know communication and social change scholar-activist Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron (2010: 71) agrees with their findings: ‘The bureaucratisation of development that Quarry and Ramirez point out is absolutely a fact and we need to stick our finger deep into that wound until it hurts.’ The healing will occur when people begin to own concepts and make it their own.

One can argue that this inability to translate concepts, fill it with local goodness, is a trait that is shared by a number of people both in the West and the Rest although the communitarian theorist Charles Taylor (2002: 91) identifies the problem as the inability of Western theorists to think of traditions and solutions to modernity outside of a single, universal framework:

‘Is there a single phenomenon here, or do we need to speak of multiple modernities, the plural reflecting the fact that non-Western cultures have modernised in their own ways and cannot be properly understood if we try to grasp them in a general theory that was originally designed with the Western case in mind.’

In spite of the fact that we now live in the context of 21st century globality, our concepts continue to be manufactured in the West, regurgitated by local elites and civil society. The great circus of global development has ensured that concepts that once had a caché in a specific context are now available as disposable products for universal consumption. In order to redeem concepts perhaps we need to begin to think of them as unfinished, always in the making, shaped in translation and in location.

Daud Sharifa Khanam, a Muslim woman in Pudukottai, Tamilnadu, is involved with other Muslim women in creating the first all women’s mosque in India. This is a local public sphere; it is about participatory development, communication rights and radical democracy. What seems to be happening is that, with or without the benefit of these concepts, change is in the air.

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The potential to empower of gender advocacy networks

Claudia Padovani

In March 2010 the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, at its 54th session in New York, undertook a revision of the implementation of the Platform for Action (PfA) adopted at the Beijing UN Conference on Women in 1995. I had the chance to attend some of the official and parallel meetings, being interested in developments concerning the PfA’s Section J on Women and Media.

I coordinated the Italian monitoring teams of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), in 2000, 2005 and 2010, which for me was an opportunity to look into the specific challenges that face women in their interaction with media and society, to witness the emergence of networks of researchers, professionals and activists, from the local to the global level, and to focus part of my own research on the role and relevance of such networks in influencing cultural change and orienting policy decisions and initiatives in order to promote a better balanced presence of women in the world’s media, capable of identity representation and recognition.

I therefore landed in New York with general curiosity to listen and understand and be inspired by the many voices and stories. And I was disappointed, more than surprised, when I realized that little relevance was given to media and communication in promoting women’s equality and dignity in contemporary societies. Although some of the speakers at the official gatherings did mention the challenges and the potential offered by media and digital technologies, the official agenda, the meeting website and the list of events paid scant attention for the theme.

It became clear that the crucial role of media and communication technologies in fostering equal opportunities does not feature high on the agenda of the international community. One of the few exceptions was the workshop jointly organized by UNIFEM and the GMMP as a parallel event, with the meaningful title ‘What happened to section J?’

Looking at the history of struggles to see women represented and their identities recognized in the media, Margaret Gallagher (forthcoming) reminds us that on the one hand the women’s movement has been slow in engaging with media policy on these issues, and on the other hand the lack of gender sensitive policies is an ongoing problem. Nevertheless, my personal experience with the GMMP suggests that these trends are changing. For the past ten years I have witnessed energies mobilized and women struggling for spaces to voice their concerns; I have seen the strengthening of linkages and the expansion of networks composed by activists and researchers, as well as women working in media.

These initiatives are grounded in a common understanding of issues and stakes, but also made of trust and the pleasure of acting together towards a more respectful, plural and democratic world of communication. How to make sense – given the crucial role of the media in contrasting disparities, poverty, and gender discrimination – of the contrast between these realities and the demoralizing scenario of the Commission on the Status of Women?

Change in contemporary communication governance

In my research on governance pertaining to media and communication in the global context, I am increasingly confronted with the issue of assessing different actors’ capacity to influence courses of action and promote change: the interplay among actors of different kinds (governments and intergovernmental organizations, trans-governmental networks, civic organizations and coalitions, private companies) who express different interests and play out different identities in the global communication environment, calls for a specific focus on how such di-
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versity can be analyzed in terms of ‘actors’ capacity’.

At UN headquarters, the question for me became once again compelling: who is capable, on the basis of which resources and through what kind of interactions, of framing issues and effectively promoting them through political and public agendas? How can relevant knowledge, such as the kind collectively produced and publicly circulated by GMMP, foster the evolution of principles, norms and standards and ultimately orientate formal decision-making on communication issues? Differently stated: who can promote change in contemporary communication governance, and how?

In addressing this issue, I gradually move beyond a widely diffused understanding of ‘global governance’ as mainly a matter of coordination and consensus, to adopt a perspective that includes more problematic dynamics of compulsion, imbalanced interactions, institutional biases (Barrett & Duvall 2005). This implies new efforts to elaborate adequate analytical frameworks, starting from a revision of the very concept of the basis on which analyses are to be conducted: that of power. A concept that should be valued for its ‘performative character’ since ‘... how we think about power may serve to reproduce and reinforce power structures and relations, or alternatively it may challenge and subvert them’ (Lukes 2005: 63).

I therefore suggest that, in order to make sense of experiences like the GMMP and assess their empowering potential in the broader context of policy arrangements, we should start by thinking of power not in terms of actors’ capacity to control other actors, but looking at their ability to ‘produce, confront or resist change’ (John Locke, cited by Steven Lukes, 2007). Then, we need to connect visible as well as non-visible aspects of power, ideational as well as cultural, normative and discursive elements that may influence actors’ capacity.

The Global Media Monitoring Project: the power of encounters
Promoted by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), the Global Media Monitoring Project is the largest and longest longitudinal study on gender representation in the world’s news media. It is also the largest advocacy initiative in the world on changing the representation of women in the media; and it is unique in involving participants from grassroots organizations, research centres and media practitioners, who participate on a voluntary basis.

GMMP is a one-day study of the representation and portrayal of women and men in the news media. First conceived at the seminar ‘Women Empowering Communication’, held in Bangkok in 1994 in preparation for the Beijing Conference, in the course of its four editions (1995, 2000, 2005, 2009/10) the GMMP has developed monitoring tools and a methodology to be applied to mainstream media with the aim of mapping the representation of women in the world’s news media, developing a grassroots research instrument and media monitoring skills, and building solidarity among gender and communication groups worldwide.

This comparative study has been supported by earlier analyses on the presence and role of women in the world media, while acting as an incentive towards further in-depth studies. In this dialogue with scholarly research, from the very beginning GMMP has shown that women are dramatically under-represented in the world’s news, their views being seldom heard, their knowledge and competence rarely recognized.

In 1995, the international community acknowledged the need to transform media content and gender portrayal as one of the strategic objectives in fostering equality and justice for women in the world, by devoting a section of the Beijing Platform for Action to the theme. Section J of the Platform is divided into two parts, respectively stating that the international community commits itself to ‘Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication’ (J.1) and ‘Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media’ (J.2).

Since 1995, the GMMP has provided factual and comparable data and inputs on how to address these challenges; it has helped to strengthen trans-national as well as trans-local connections among monitoring organizations; it has contributed to expanding global awareness on the theme. The project participatory methodology, aimed at balancing a rigorous collection of data with accessibility of monitoring materials and results for non-expert researchers, has been updated and improved with each successive GMMP.
Results from the 2010 edition, a monitoring day organized on November 10, 2009 with the participation of 108 countries, once again show the slow pace of change in redressing gender imbalances in the news media: only 24% of news subjects – the people who are interviewed, or talked about – are female (the figures were 17% in 1995 and 21% in 2005); women’s points of view are rarely heard in the topics that dominate the news agenda, such as politics or economics (of the few stories where women feature, only 19% and 20% respectively concern those ‘hard topics’). Even in stories that affect women profoundly, such as gender-based violence, it is the male voice that prevails.

When women do make the news it is primarily as ‘celebrities’ (26%); their function as representatives of ‘ordinary people’ and ‘popular opinion’ has grown (44% in 2010, 34% in 2005), but they remain marginal as figures of authority, experts (20%) or spokespersons (19%). As newsmakers, women are no longer under-represented in professional categories, as there is a clear trend of feminization within media professions (more evident in TV news than in other media); a trend that is finally showing an emerging gender-sensitivity and some efforts to contrast gender stereotypes, which nevertheless remain widely diffused.

The topic mostly covered by women journalists are science and health (44%) and social and legal issues (43%). While the study finds few excellent examples of gender-balanced and gender-sensitive journalism, it demonstrates, once again, an overall glaring deficit in the news media globally.

Promoting change
GMMP is not just about monitoring. Over time its goals have expanded: alongside the aim to map gender portrayals in the world’s news media and create awareness within the broad public, efforts were made to develop monitoring skills and to use project results to influence agendas of national as well as international organizations and orientate their decisions. The results of GMMP have been used in a myriad of ways by gender and communication groups worldwide, as well as in conducting training for media practitioners, media literacy initiatives and lobbying. The GMMP has become a sort of ‘brand’: a reality with its own identity, widely cited and capable of providing data that are comparable across regions and continents. A reality with an empowering potential for change?

The GMMP is definitely about change. As the Bangkok Declaration stated in 1994:

‘It is essential to promote forms of communication that not only challenge the patriarchal nature of media but strive to decentralize and democratize them: to create media that encourage dialogue and debate; media that advance women and peoples’ creativity; media that reaffirm women’s wisdom and knowledge, and that make people into subjects rather than objects or targets of communication. Media which are responsive to people’s needs.’

And not just the idea of change in media representation but also a vision of democratization of media and communication system is at the origin of the GMMP.

The GMMP is also about the role of data and knowledge in promoting change: it reaches out to scholarly knowledge and the scientific community to develop a methodology for monitoring activities that provide accurate readings of reality, while, at the same time, transforming concepts and analytical tools into resources and widespread skills. Furthermore, scholars and academic institutions have been directly involved in monitoring activities and in publicizing results. We can therefore consider the ‘power of ideas and knowledge’ at work, through the contribution of an epistemic community engaging trans-nationally with a shared understanding of values and issues, oriented towards policy-relevant knowledge diffusion.

Moreover, the project is about strengthening transnational cooperation to promote change: monitoring activities develop within and at the same time contribute to create a broad transnational network supported by the whomakesthenews.org website and the people coordinating the project. At the same time the GMMP is composed of national and sometimes regional networks of groups and individual researchers that on many occasions have given birth to further projects.

Finally, GMMP is part of a broader network of intergovernmental agencies, which includes Unifem and UNESCO, as well as nongovernmental organizations. It can therefore be considered a ‘trans-
national advocacy network’ (TAN)\textsuperscript{7} and analyzed according to the framework suggested by Keck and Sikkink (1998) who have articulated the different forms of politics at play in TANs’ operations: informational politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics and accountability politics.\textsuperscript{8} The GMMP as TAN is therefore a clear example of what has been defined as ‘power with’: the power to act together with others towards a common goal.

There is also an interplay of levels of action to be considered: from the local adaptation and application of GMMP methodology to the strengthening of national cooperation between research centres, media professional associations and civic groups, to the regional coordination for training and diffusion of results, to the supra-national playing out of project results as data that are now mentioned in official UN reports. This multi-level feature of operation is seldom adequately addressed, and yet it is relevant, both a point of strength and a challenge, for a project like the GMMP.

There is also, beyond the interplay of different actors and levels, an interplay of spaces of action, as we see people organizing for the monitoring project as well as to diffuse and discuss data from the GMMP, moving between the closed spaces of governmental negotiation (Beijing 1995), open official consultations (UN CSW 2010), negotiating spaces for debate (New York parallel events), and claiming (alternative) media spaces to perform different gender representation and story telling (mailing lists and websites that have provided updates and information from within the UN meetings).

Lastly, there are the visible outcomes of some of these interactions, from the framing of specific issues to create public awareness – on gender visibility in the media, gendered roles in media profession, gender positions in the governance of communication networks, the gendered dimension of the digital divide – to the adoption of normative statements and standards of conduct (Section J of the Beijing PfA).

I therefore see the GMMP project at the crossroads of three distinct but interconnected realities: that of the research community, that of advocacy intervention and that of policy-finding and decision-making formal activities. Each of these realities performs roles that are relevant to promoting or resisting change: in the case of the research community it is the ideas, the knowledge produced and the very framing of issues, that contribute to define gender and media as a policy-relevant topic; in the case of the advocacy community it is the playing out of this understanding to create public awareness and promote actions and cultural practices but also norms, codes of conducts and standards of behaviour; and in the case of policy interventions, it is the decisions taken and the commitment and responsibility to follow up with such decisions.

No assessment of such an articulated reality can be done by taking into consideration only one aspect or another. No one-dimensional understanding of power can shed light on the multiple configurations of actors and actions where GMMP interacts: the visible outcome of formal negotiations (Section J of the Beijing PfA); the less visible outcome of bargaining activities to include or exclude topics from the official agenda (the nexus between women and media not addressed by the CSW); the invisible forces at play in shaping public understanding of issues and challenges.

If we are to assess GMMP’s empowering potential, we therefore need to adopt a multidimensional perspective on power to shed light on the different elements that contribute to its capacity to bring about change.

Rethinking power and assessing actors’ capacity to produce change

The concept of power has a long history in political thinking and remains at the core of any analysis of political behaviour and participation. Over the centuries, power has been understood as a capacity, as the activation of specific resources, as grounded in different forms of legitimation. The second half of the 20th century has spawned new reflections on the topic, from a now classical conceptualization of power as actors’ ability to determine others’ behaviour (Dahl, 1961), to a focus on less visible forms of power.

On the one hand it has been acknowledged that ‘To the extent that a person or a group – consciously or unconsciously – creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power’ (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970: 8). This is the kind of power that is mostly visible in issue framing and agenda setting activities. On the other hand, the power to ‘prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shap-
ing their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things’ has also been recognized (Lukes 2005: 11). The debate is still open and recent reflections offer a fascinating plurality of approaches.9

For the purpose of this paper I refer to a specific analytic framework – the ‘power cube’ – elaborated by John Gaventa,10 which is consistent with our goal of assessing the reality of GMMP: different actors engaged on a specific issues, at different levels and in different venues, and playing out different repertoires of action to promote the dignity and full recognition of women in the media.11

The starting point in elaborating the analytic framework is the recognition that perceptions of governing arrangements are changing, thus creating new spaces for engagement and new forms of power within and between them. Secondly, relationships and interconnections between the local, national and global are altering actors’ understanding of where power is located and where it may be exercised. Finally, the changing role of knowledge and expertise creates new boundaries which affect whose voices enter policy processes, and whose knowledge counts.

Relating this to GMMP, it is clear that from community to international debates, a plurality of interventions may contribute to bringing about gender-sensitive media content while more and more women and groups are actively promoting alternative practices of gender-sensitive media. The interaction between local initiatives and supra-national responses is facilitated by communication channels, digital technologies and growing levels of networking; policy actors should no longer disregard the amount of information and knowledge that women organizations have put together concerning imbalances and discrimination in the media.

In this context different forms of power can be recognized: when contests over interests (for instance freedom of expression versus pluralism in media content and women’s equal opportunities) are visible in public spaces, which are presumed to be relatively open, there is visible power; when barriers preclude the entry of certain actors and issues in those public spaces, as it seems to have been the case at the CSW gathering, we have hidden power; while invisible power is at work when visible conflict is hidden through internalisation of powerlessness or lack of awareness (how often does media professional training promote a gender-aware understanding of media environments?).

As for spaces of engagement – considered as opportunities and channels where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions and relationships – how the space is created affects the power within it, since ‘freedom is not only the right to participate effectively in a given space, but the right to define and to shape that space’ (Gaventa, 2005: 12).

If a space is closed to public scrutiny it is characterized by exclusivity; if it is open to contributions from the public it may create opportunities for participation, to be assessed empirically; but we can also have the autonomous creation of spaces for action from the ground up, which are claims to express voices through people’s own means and words. Gender mobilization around the media should therefore be aware of the peculiar role of the different spaces of meaning negotiation (for instance exclusive governmental clubs, open consultations and alternative media), as well as of the interplay between them.

The picture represents the way in which the three dimensions of levels, spaces and forms of power can be visualized as interconnected.

As an analytic framework, the power cube can be used to orientate strategies for mobilisation and action as well as to conduct research and to analyse existing specific processes. Referring to the GMMP, I suggest it could be used to map power and possible spaces for change around the specific issue of women and media, from the local to the global; to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the project and its organization; to map its capacity to pro-
duce change over time. It could also be used as an education tool amongst GMMP monitoring teams, to build awareness of and systematically address its empowering potential in engaging with both the cultural and communication environment as well as with policy actors, at different levels.

Towards a research agenda
Considering the history of GMMP and its efforts at fostering monitoring activities also as a means to build social capacity and mobilization, we can approach the power cube keeping in mind that ‘From a movement building perspective, it is perhaps when social actions are aligned across levels, forms of power and spaces, that real ‘breakthroughs’ or turning points in existing structures may occur’ (Gaventa, 2005: 27). The power cube therefore provides a multidimensional assessment tool that calls attention to the interconnections between spaces and levels, actors’ goals and forms of power, while allowing evaluation of the different goals of the GMMP within a single and consistent framework.

Initial questions for a research agenda could therefore deal with: a) connections across spaces (how do civil society actors involved in GMMP build alliances across spaces and strategies? How do they maintain on-going channels of communication across spaces, and at what costs?) and b) with vertical as well as horizontal linkages (who represents whom across the levels? How are actors at each level held accountable and how do they relate to the overall aims of the GMMP?).

Such questions should in the first place contribute to clarifying how visible, hidden and invisible forms of power take shape at every level, from local struggles to global policy processes, as far as the specific challenges posed by the multiplicity of issues connected to women and media.

A systematic mapping of the contexts within which GMMP operates, from the global to the local, can certainly provide insight into better understanding of the influence the project may have exerted over time and its potential to promote further change, duly considering its diversified power sources: from the data and knowledge produced, to its capacity to network such knowledge and translate it into advocacy, to the actual impact on policy orientations.

Further elements in the analysis may therefore relate to an evaluation of which strategies are effective in strengthening policy advocacy capacities (visible power); which strategies create more inclusive spaces and support grassroots and local movements in airing their concerns (hidden power); which strategies build awareness and mobilise the unorganised (invisible power).

Depending on the researcher’s interest, each component of the power cube can be adopted as an entry point to the analysis, which can then move across levels or spaces, in the attempt to identify the challenges and shortcomings of national, regional and trans-national GMMP-related mobilizations.

As for how the power cube should be used, Gaventa also offers some ‘tips’. The first tip concerns the fact that power analysis always implies a dynamic and not a static approach: critical reflection should build on the historic record of GMMP since 1995, which provides a useful timeline to address the dynamics of change, both within the project and in the broader media and policy context.

A second tip concerns the diversity and fluidity of spaces of engagement: not only different actors move across spaces and levels, but the spaces in which GMMP has mobilized may have changed over time and may require changes in the project in order to maintain its capacity to act.

Finally, the forms of power are certainly not fixed and static, but constantly interact with each other: understanding the specificities of visible, hidden and invisible power concerning the nexus between women, media and communication, at different levels, may help re-orientate strategies and resources, thus contributing to making GMMP possibly more relevant in promoting ‘media that advance women and peoples’ creativity … (and reaffirm) women’s wisdom and knowledge.’

Notes
1. The project is developed within the Media and Gender Justice programme of the World Association for Christian Communication (http://www.waccglobal.org/). For further information about the project and its methodology and results, see www.whomakesthenews.org, where all reports from past editions can also be found. On the 2010 GMMP edition and its nexus with the revision of the Beijing PfA and the Millennium Development Goal, see also Media Development 1/2010.
3. Section J of the Beijing Platform of Action also provides a set of guidelines and concrete actions to be taken by govern-
ments, media outlets and civic groups. For the full text of the Platform see http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/.

4. Over time improvements in the methodology included tutorial made available in different languages, accessible from the project website and paralleled by seminars organized by WACC and coordinating agencies. It should also be noted that GMMP proposes an adaptable methodology that has subsequently been used for other purposes by other organizations both at the local and international levels. For example, in 2001, RED-ADA, Bolivia’s most important women’s communication network monitored the portrayal of women in advertising on TV, radio and in the press using the methodology developed for GMMP 2000. In Italy, the Osservatorio di Pavia has used the GMMP methodology to monitor local TVs, thus offering elements for comparison from the local to the global level.


6. Several examples of good practices stemmed out the GMMP are offered on the project website: http://www.whomakesthenews.org/gmmp-background.html.

7. ‘TANs include those actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse and dense exchanges of information and services’ (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

8. Gallagher (forthcoming) offers a detailed analysis of women networks’ interventions, including GMMP, through the typology proposed by Keck and Sikkink.

9. Debates around the concept of power in international politics are alive: from Nye’s argument about ‘soft power’ (1990), to Peter Haas’s focus on the ‘role of networks of knowledge based experts and epistemic communities’ as forms of power (1992: 2), to network configurations of power as recently suggested by Khaler 2009, Sikkink 2009, Singh 2008 and Castells 2009.

10. This section builds on Gaventa 2005, 2006. More information and relevant materials can be found at http://www.powercube.net/analyse-power/

11. It should be noted that the power cube focuses primarily on power in ‘the public sphere’, and does not provide insights on the more intimate and private spheres where power relations develop, which have been meaningfully investigated by feminist scholarship. Nevertheless in our effort to assess the policy implications of GMMP, it provides a very interesting tool.

References

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Testing sustainability: A new framework

Emily Polk, Danielle Reilly, Jan Servaes, Song Shi & Thanu Yakupitijage

The term ‘sustainability’ has grown increasingly popular in recent years as development experts seek to measure the long-term impacts of their projects. Although there is no commonly agreed definition of ‘sustainability,’ the word has become a catchphrase heard everywhere from the Copenhagen conference on climate change to the latest PR from Wal-Mart. It is most often used to describe the desired goal of lasting change within institutions, communities, and projects.

The concept of sustainable development (SD) first emerged in the late 1970s in response to a growing realization of the need to balance economic and social progress with concern for the environment and the stewardship of natural resources. In this article the authors synthesized the relatively recent emergence of sustainability themes in communication for development, and used that as a foundation to create a sustainability framework that can be used by a wide variety of people in the development field.

The intention is to provide a tool to aid in the evaluation of the sustainability of development projects. We also have applied our indicators to a specific project: the Sierra Leone Health Sector Reconstruction and Development Project, a World Bank funded project designed to develop the country’s health system in the aftermath of its civil war.

The framework includes four categories: Health, Education, Environment, and Governance. Eight indicators were selected to assess each of the categories: actors (the people involved in the project, which may include opinion leaders, community activists, tribal elders, youth, etc.), factors (structural and conjunctural), levels (local, state, regional, national, international, global), types of communication (behavioural change, mass communication, advocacy, participatory communication, or communication for sustainable social change— which is likely a mix of all of the above), channels (face-to-face, print, radio, TV, ICT, mobile/online), messages (the content of the project, campaign), processes (Diffusion-centered, one-way, information-persuasion strategies, interactive and dialogical), methods (quantitative, qualitative, participatory, or in combination), and our final indicator is the clarity, reception, and production of the message.

We considered whether the message was developed by the community? Was it received and understood? For each indicator we developed a set of questions designed to specifically measure the sustainability of the project. For example, are the channels compatible with both the capacity of the actors and the structural and conjunctural factors? To what extent was the process participatory and consistent with the cultural values of the community? Was the message developed by local actors in the community and how was it understood by them?

Framework test

Sierra Leone is emerging from a decade of civil war, which ceased in January 2002. The goal of the Republic of Sierra Leone’s Health Sector Reconstruction and Development Project, funded by the World Bank, was to refurbish the most essential functions of the health care system. The project was divided into two main components: the restoration of essential health services and the strengthening of public and private sector capacity.

More specific aims included (a) increasing access to affordable essential health services, (b) improving the performance of key technical programs responsible for coping with the country’s major public health problems, (c) strengthening the management capacity of the health sector and decentralizing decision-making to the
district facilities, and finally, (d) supporting the development of the private NGO sector and the participation of civil society in decision-making.

1. The first indicator of sustainability of the project is the actors. It focuses on the fundamental question: who are the people involved in this project. In order for a project to be truly sustainable, it must take into account all of the stakeholders involved. Major actors involved in this project include: international and local NGOs, government, private providers of health services and, to a lesser degree, local community members.

The development of the private NGO health sector and involvement of the civil society in decision-making is highlighted as one of the four project objectives (World Bank, 2003 p 2). This project has carefully considered how it can involve consultations or collaboration with NGOs or other civil society organizations (World Bank, 2003 p 24). Government is also an important actor in this project. The third objective is to improve efficiency and make the health sector more responsive to the needs of the population. A main way to achieve this is to support five key services of the MOHS (i.e., Human Resources Development; Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation; Financial Management; Procurement; and Donor and NGO coordination). Through MOHS, the government played an active role in this project. Private providers of health services are also an actor.

Specifically, the project finances consultations with the private Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Associations and meetings with the Traditional Medicine Association to discuss ways for strengthening collaboration and registration. Although local community members are not addressed, they are involved in more detailed discussion regarding specific projects or services. For example, in the final report of Environmental Assessment, when discussing awareness-raising regarding the management of insecticide-treated bed-nets, this project described how local community members formed bed-net committees in their own communities (Reynolds Godfrey Johnson & John Tommy, 2002, p 24).

In sum, both NGOs and government have been well addressed. However, the local community members have been partly overlooked at least in the general introduction of this project. To strengthen the sustainability of this project, there must be better ways of involving the local community members.

2. The second indicator of sustainability is the factors that have been considered, both structural and conjunctural. The major factor considered in this project is structural, more specifically, economic. This project sought to address the financial issues surrounding the overall health policies of the country, for example the fee for service system and cost of drugs. One impressive point in terms of sustainability is that conjunctural factors were also considered. For example, Avian Influenza, a conjunctural factor which may have a strong impact on public health, was carefully considered. A detailed avian flu control program was included in the environmental assessment (Reynolds Godfrey Johnson & John Tommy, 2002, p 113), thus, increasing the project’s sustainability.

3. The third sustainability indicator is the level, denoting the levels of government targeted. The Sierra Leone project primarily targets the regional level although the states and local are also involved. The objective of the project is to provide health related assistance for four regional districts in the country. At the same time, on the state level, the project sought to decentralize the health sectors by strengthening District Health Management Teams and on the local level, it aims to encourage the civil society’s involvement. So, while the project is most focused on mid-size rural districts (regional), it is also reaching the local and state levels through policy change and decentralization.

4. The fourth of our sustainability indicators is the type of communication used in the project. A combination of mass communication and advocacy communication allows HSRDP to communicate practices to strengthen the capacity of Sierra Leone health workers. For example, in the Waste Management Plan (WMP), a guideline and implementation strategy for HSRDP, the key goal is to train health providers how to dispose of medical waste. Mass communication was used in an education campaign to increase public awareness about the risks of waste disposal practices. Through the mediums of radio, television, posters, leaflets, newspapers and poster exhibitions on healthcare waste issues, a larger public can be informed (Tommy, 2002, p 16). At the same time, incorporated with some interpersonal communication such as training workshops for health providers
and hospital staff, this mass communication campaign also serviced as an effective advocacy tool.

5. **The fifth of our sustainability indicators is the communication channels used.** To evaluate the sustainability of this project, we studied whether the chosen channels are compatible with actors’ capacity and structural factors (such as the economic base). Both mass communication channels such as radio, TV and print, and interpersonal communication channels such as face-to-face communication are involved. For example, when discussing awareness raising regarding the management of insecticide-treated bed-nets, the project noted that TV and radio discussions would be organized, posters would be developed and placed in strategic locations and regular health education sessions within the communities would be conducted (Reynolds Godfrey Johnson & John Tommy, 2002, p 24). Also, in the health education sessions within the communities, interpersonal communication such as face-to-face communication is used. (Reynolds Godfrey Johnson & John Tommy, 2002 p 24; Reynolds Godfrey Johnson & John Tommy, 2002, p 60).

Moreover, the chosen channels are compatible with the actors’ capacity and the structural factors of this project. For example, for government and international NGOs, TV and radio are accessible channels and the cost is acceptable. For the members of local communities, because of the low Gross primary enrolment rate (percent of school age population) of the actors, radio, TV and face-to-face communications are better channels than other channels such as books and newspapers which require literacy. But further consideration is also needed to increase the sustainability of the project. For example, we could not discern if the cost of radios and TV sets were acceptable for local communities since the economic base, an important structural factor of this project, is relatively poor.

6. **The sixth indicator is the process of communication that the project uses.** A combination of persuasion, one-way transmission and interactive dialogue is used in this project. For example, through trainings, health workers and staff are taught and often persuaded to use the appropriate means of waste disposal. In these trainings, an interactive dialogue occurs between the trainers and the trainees in order to clarify information and dialogue about efficient health care service provisions. Mass communication tactics such as the use of radio, television, information pamphlets or posters detailing the risk of improper waste management and the raising of public awareness, is a mixture of persuasive and one-way transmission techniques.

However, it must be noted that while participation interaction does occur between trainers and trainees in training interventions, the role of the training itself is to disseminate in an expert-led manner information to health workers. Hence, advocacy takes a larger role in training than participation of health workers in the creation of training projects.

7. **The seventh of our sustainability indicators is the methods used.** The methods used in this project are mixed although quantitative methods play a more important role. For example, quantitative indicators such as immunization coverage (the percentage of children aged 12 to 23 months immunized against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus), the contraceptive prevalence rate and the percentage of deliveries assisted by a doctor, nurse or midwife are used as key performance indicators (World Bank, 2003, p 2). Also, quantitative data from nationwide surveys were used as base-line data to evaluate the outcomes (World Bank, 2003, p 3). At the same time, qualitative methods such as interviews are used. For example, when doing environmental assessments, an interview method was used to explore concerns of local community members in the four districts where the projects were launched (World Bank, 2003, p 23).

8. **Our final indicator is the clarity, reception, and production of the message.** For this project, the message of appropriate waste management was developed by multiple stakeholders including the MOHS, National HIV/AIDS Secretariat (NAS), Health Sector AIDS Response Group (ARG), local and foreign NGOs, as well as the private sector in Sierra Leone (Tommy, 2002, p 4). The participation of multiple stakeholders in the message creation shows a collaborative process by those at the very top, as well as those with more of a grassroots reach.

However, as the message is being created for communities not associated with these stakeholders, it cannot be said that local communities are involved in message creation and message creation remains expert-led. Health workers, hospital staff, and locals living close to landfills and prone to garbage dump scavenging practices are
the communities being targeted. Current information on the project does not detail whether the message was correctly received or understood.

It is also unclear what follow-up occurs after the training of health workers and community members. Follow-up by HSRDP is crucial in terms of ensuring that message transfer was successful and that health workers are implementing the new practices advocated for in the trainings. If this does not occur, it is questionable what the sustainability of training and advocacy has in the long run. A recommendation for HSRDP trainings would be a focus on follow-up to ensure that new health practices are being implemented by health workers and staff.

Conclusion
After testing the Sierra Leone Reconstruction project, we were able to get a better sense of the applicability of the sustainability indicators, and found that analysis based on these indicators could provide productive recommendations for the project. For example, in our analysis of the actors, we found that the inclusion of the local community, an important component to creating sustainable projects, is less highlighted. Directly related to this are the channels and process utilized by the project. It neglected to consider the cost of this method from the point of view of the community members. Had they addressed the inaccessibility and cost of radio and TV sets for community members, the project could have increased its sustainability.

Similarly, in terms of the type of communication utilized, the Sierra Leone Reconstruction project employed expert-led communication strategies in order to train their respective communities. While it was clearly indicated that the main strategy used was advocacy – for example training health sector workers how to appropriately implement new health practices like the disposal of health-related waste – there was no information on follow-up procedures beyond advocacy and how to involve the local community.

For any project concerned with sustainable development, there is a great need for the establishment and implementation of better long-term follow up plans. Sustainability requires continuous and long-term evaluation and monitoring. The Sierra Leone project collected baseline health data for Sierra Leone, for example immunization coverage, and noted that the evaluator will compare the outcomes with the baseline to determine whether progress is being made. While this is a step in the right direction, greater plans for follow up need to be set in place in the initial plan and thoroughly carried out.

Overall, it was agreed that more first hand information and experience with the project would lead to an increased ability to analyze a project with our framework. Yet, our test on the Sierra Leone Reconstruction project suggests that the categories and indicators we identified give good insight to the sustainable elements. The project we tested has promises of sustainability, but we have concluded that the true sustainability of the project is determined by its ability to successfully involve the local community in the translation of its aims and goals into practices whose positive impacts are not only felt in the community, but in the opportunities available for members to measure and evaluate it as well.

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Cinematic reflections on meaning and choice

John P. Ferré

The Montreal World Film Festival takes great pride in being a venue for young film directors trying to make a name for themselves. So, unlike the larger and more commercial festivals in Toronto or Cannes that attract a constellation of household-name movie stars, Montreal keeps its focus squarely on film directors and their art-house productions, this year making film lovers happy with a smorgasbord of 430 films from 80 countries.

The 2010 festival, which ran from August 26 through September 6, did attract David Arquette, who flew in for a day to promote the premier of The Land of the Astronauts, a movie about an alcoholic composer whose life is in free fall. And Gérard Depardieu talked about his acting career and outlook before a sell-out crowd in the historic Cinéma Impérial on the festival’s closing day. But those were noticeable exceptions. Far more typically, film premiers were followed by question-and-answer sessions with directors, actors, and screen writers at the theater and later by a public press conference.

This year’s Ecumenical Jury, charged with recognizing a film of artistic merit that explores ‘the ethical, social, and spiritual values that make life human,’ judged 20 films in world competition. I worked with three Roman Catholics (cinematographer Jean-Yves Fischbach from France, communications consultant Louise Fleischmann from Canada, and Jesuit film critic Richard Leonard from Australia) and two other Protestants (film

NEW HONORARY LIFE MEMBER OF WACC

Carlos Valle, a Methodist minister from Argentina, was WACC General Secretary 1986-2001. Previously he served on the Executive Committee of WACC’s Latin America Region, WACC’s Board of Directors and as a Methodist pastor.

A former President of the Protestant film organization INTERFILM, Valle was a staff member of the ecumenical theological school, ISIDET, in Buenos Aires, where he taught various courses on communication, especially film and theology.

Upon retiring, Carlos returned to Argentina to continue to write on issues related to communication, to work for his church, and to take an active part in promoting communication rights and social justice.

Carlos Valle has written several books, published in both Spanish and English. They include Comunicación es evento (1988), Comunicación: modelo para armar (1990), and Communication and Mission: In the Labyrinth of Globalisation (2002).
critic Daniel Grivel from Switzerland and WACC Deputy General Secretary Lavinia Mohr from Canada, who served as president of the jury).

Roman Catholic members of the jury are appointed by SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communication (www.signis.net). Protestant members of the jury are appointed by INTERFILM, the World Council of Churches affiliate that highlights connections between church and cinema (www.inter-film.org). The Ecumenical Jury was unanimous in its choice of films for the Prize as well as for the Special Mention.

The 20 films from 12 countries on three continents that we watched were as varied in theme as they were in place of origin. They dealt with grief, dignity, love, sexuality, justice, honesty, poverty, trust, and rejection. Relationships were at the center of all of them, sometimes couples, sometimes communities, but most often families. Most of these films showed mothers and fathers and their children coming to terms with tragedy, poverty, injustice, deceit, or betrayal. Often the problems they faced were caused by forces beyond their control; sometimes they brought problems on themselves by the choices they made.

The Prize of the Ecumenical Jury went to Adem (Oxygen), the debut feature film by 29-year-old Belgian director Hans Van Nuffel that asks viewers to consider how they should spend the time they have to live. Adem focuses on two young men, Tom (Stef Aerts) and Xavier (Wouter Hendrickx), who suffer with cystic fibrosis and will likely not live past their 20s without a lung transplant. Much of the movie takes place in a Belgian hospital, where Tom and Xavier stay for increasing periods of time as their condition deteriorates.

Neither Tom nor Xavier feels self-pity, but each chooses to live differently. The younger Tom is reckless. He is the rebel who steals, manufactures methamphetamine, and smokes. His hospital neighbour Xavier, by contrast, lives the life of an athlete and has a long-term relationship with a woman who also has cystic fibrosis who wants to have a child by Xavier. Tom and Xavier become friends, at times uneasily, as their breathing grows shallower and as their need for risky lung replacement surgery grows. The film ends unsentimentally and without easy resolution, but it demands an answer to the question, what makes life worth living?

No doubt the film’s adroit handling of what it’s like to live with a degenerative, terminal disease has everything to do with the fact that Van Nuffel, who both wrote and directed Adem, has cystic fibrosis himself. ‘I know my future is uncertain,’ Van Nuffel told The Montreal Gazette. ‘So I have decided that it’s best just to live with it and try to move on.’ Van Nuffel’s observation serves as an understated synopsis of his film.

The Ecumenical Jury gave a Special Mention to Das Lied in Mir (The Day I was not Born), a film by another debut director, Florian Cossen of Germany. Das Lied in Mir focuses on Maria (Jessica Schwartz), a 31-year-old German who hears a lullaby sung in Spanish while she is waiting for a connecting flight in Buenos Aires. Although she
doesn’t speak Spanish herself, she recognizes the lullaby and begins to sing along softly. Delayed in Buenos Aires because her passport is stolen, Maria is joined by her father, who confesses that he adopted her when she was three years old after her birth parents disappeared during the brutal rule of Argentine President Jorge Rafael Videla.

But the father’s confession is a half truth. After Maria locates her aunt, she learns that her father did not adopt her – he forged documents in order to steal her from her extended family and her home country. The rest of the film is a poignant drama with Maria situated between her aunt, who wants Maria’s father brought to justice in a court of law, and her father, who has shown love to Maria throughout her life. Das Lied in Mir highlights the importance of honesty, memory, identity, justice, and respect for persons to the uneasy process of reconciliation.

The Montreal film festival is definitely a public festival. The Montreal Gazette reported attendance as well over 400,000 with a broad range of age and education. The public chose the artwork for this year’s festival poster, and the public voted on its favourite movie, Pájaros de Papel (Paper Birds), Emilio Aragón’s touching Spanish drama about vaudeville performers set in the era of Francoist repression after the Spanish Civil War.

Montreal is fortunate to have its world film festival. Few international buyers may go there to make international deals and more movies from the province of Quebec opened in Toronto than in Montreal, but it is a huge festival both in terms of films and of viewers. Most of the films, however high their quality, will never become available commercially, so the festival is the only place where they can be seen.

Movie lovers everywhere understand that films, as cinematic reflections on human experience and imagination, have the capacity to stimulate discussion about art, perspective, and representation as well as character, motivation, and choice. In the words of the instructions to the Ecumenical Jury, the best films ‘raise audience consciousness of the transcendent dimensions of life’ and ‘dramatize human values and contribute to human progress.’ These are the films that make for memories in Montreal.

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IN THE EVENT...

MEDIA, RELIGION, AND CULTURE

The 7th International Conference on Media, Religion, and Culture took place at Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada, 9-13 August 2010. This series of events was initiated in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1994, followed by an international public meeting in 1996 in Boulder, Colorado, USA. Past conferences have brought to the fore research into both very old and very new mediums of communication, with traditions ranging from ancient indigenous practice to the most recent cyber-ritual, from settings in the global north and south.

The conference was organised by Joyce Smith, Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director in the School of Journalism. Some 150 participants heard Canadian artist Jane Ash Poitras speak of the role of art in religion and of religion in art. This was followed by three and a half intensive days of in which papers were presented, discussed and critiqued on a wide range of topics.

At the end of the conference participants met to agree the framework for an International Society for Media, Religion and Culture which will put such work on a more formal footing. They also heard that the next conference will take place at Anadolu University, Eskisehir, Turkey, in 2012. It will be organised by Dr Nezih Orhon, Associate Professor in the School of Communication Sciences and a WACC personal member.

WACC Global has long supported the work of the Conference on Media, Religion and Society coordinated by Professor Stewart Hoover, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA. Its areas of study are closely related to many of the themes explored in WACC’s own programmes and the announcement of the formation of a Society – especially one that deliberately places emphasis on knowledge and learning from the global South – will be greeted with warmth and enthusiasm.
ON THE SCREEN...

ZLIN (CZECH REPUBLIC) 
2010

The Ecumenical Jury at the 50th International Film Festival for Children and Youth http://www.zlin-fest.cz/en/ which took place 30 May to 6 June 2010 awarded its Prize in the International Competition of Feature Films for Children to Indián (The Indian) directed by Ineke Houtman (The Netherlands, 2009).

Koos, a little boy of almost eight, has been adopted from Peru as a baby. When his adoptive Dutch mother becomes pregnant, his search for his Indian roots becomes more intense. The story is told in a way that a child can understand the feelings of Koos and his aim to become a true Indian and to discover his Indian name that should indicate the qualities or specific characteristics of its owner. Koos evolves a strong faith which shows him that his best friend lives not outside himself but deep inside his soul.

Synopsis (Catalogue): Koos (a little boy of almost eight) very much wants to look like his impressive, typically Dutch father, which is not an easy thing, as Koos has been adopted from Peru and is rather small and of dark complexion. One day, he sees a Peruvian boy playing a strange kind of music outside the supermarket and discovers that he, like the boy, is of Indian origin. From that day on, despite his Dutch parents, he tries his very best to be a true Indian.

The Jury awarded its Prize in the International Competition of Feature Films for Youth to Sebbe directed by Babak Najafi (Sweden/Finland 2010). Sebbe is fifteen and lives with his mother in a much too small apartment. He loves her, although she hardly has time for him and is not only often away but also drinking. In addition, Sebbe continuously suffers severe mischiefousness at school by his classmates.

All this is shown by the film in a highly innovative and impressive way – mostly exposing in detail the perspective of Sebbe and his emotions, his search for love and his attempt to escape and to find new hope.

Synopsis (Catalogue): Sebbe is fifteen and lives with his mother in an apartment that is much too small. He does his best. He never hits back. Sebbe loves his mother because he can’t do otherwise. Sebbe escapes to the junkyard, and in his hands, dead things come to life. He has the power to create. Here he is free, but alone. His detachment increases at the same pace that his world shrinks, until finally, one day he is completely isolated without anyone except his mother. When she fails him, all else fails.

YEREVAN (ARMENIA) 
2010

At the Yerevan International Film Festival (the 7th Golden Apricot held 11-18 July 2010) the Ecumenical Jury awarded its Prize to Don’t look in the mirror (Mi nayir hayelun) directed by Suren Babayan (Armenia, 2009). Full of imagination and artistic metaphoric language, the film presents an existential human journey in search of identity in a confused world – an identity which can be found only by recognizing oneself in other human beings.

Synopsis: One day, an aging, none-too-attractive man, whose artistic ambitions faded long ago, looks in the mirror and sees an entirely different person. His life changes into a bizarre series of comic and tragic episodes. Director Suren Babayan based his movie on the novel by Perch Zeytuntsyan as an original variation on the classic tale of the mirror double.

In addition, the jury awarded a Commendation to How I Ended This Summer (Kak ja provel etim letom) directed by Aleksei Popogrebsky (Russia, 2010). With laconic but rich and essential images the film, set in an isolated and silent landscape, shows the development of a confrontation among two men with different values and priorities. As the conflict implodes and it seems impossible for them to communicate, a sign of forgiveness opens a possibility of a silent dialogue and of a final reconciliation between the two.

Synopsis: Sergei, an experienced meteorologist, and Pavel, a high school graduate, are looking forward to the end of their service at an isolated polar...
station. When Pavel receives a message about an accident in Sergei's family, he conceals it from his partner. But then he learns that the ship meant to pick them up might not arrive this year.

**Karlovy Vary (Czech Republic) 2010**

At the 45th International Film Festival (2-10 July 2010) the Ecumenical Jury awarded its prize to the film *Another Sky* directed by by Dmitrij Mamulija (Russia, 2010). *Another Sky* is the first feature film by the Georgian director, in the best tradition of the transcendental style in film. Depicting a shepherd of Central Asian origin who goes to a big Russian city, doesn’t speak Russian and is trying to find his wife and the mother of his son, the film evokes the eternal subject of sacrifice and rebirth. It is the story of a deep spiritual journey that provokes the viewer to see anew the world we live in.

The Ecumenical Jury awarded a Commendation to the film *Hitler à Hollywood /Hitler in Hollywood* directed by Frédéric Sojcher (Belgium/France/Italy, 2010). The jury made the award because the film is a plea for the diversity of cultures and the need for expression of plurality, against uniformity and manipulation. The film is delivered in a brilliant, intelligent, cheerful and humorous style.

The members of the Ecumenical Jury at the festival were Helena Babická (Czech Republic), Lukáš Jirsa (Czech Republic), Dr. Charles Martig (Switzerland), President, Cindy Mollaret (France), Dr. h.c. Hans-Joachim Schlegel (Germany), and Prof. Dr. Jean-Michel Zucker (France).

**Locarno (Switzerland) 2010**

At the 63rd International Festival of Film held 4-4 August 2010 the Ecumenical Jury awarded its prize to *Morgen* directed by Marian Crisan (France/Romania/Hungary, 2010). Nelu, a Romanian market security guard, befriends an illegal Turkish immigrant. Somehow this would be impossible in today’s world. However, in cinema it becomes a heart-warming series of events that override language and cultural barriers to unveil similarities in life and compassion for the human experience.

The Jury also awarded a Commendation to the film *Han jia / Winter Vacation* directed by Li Hongqi (China, 2010). Through a series of constructed images, long takes, and brief often humorous dialogue, Li Hongqi describes the last day of a winter vacation from a melancholic but heart-warming point of view.

The Jury awarded a second Commendation to the film *Karamay* directed by Xu Xin (China, 2010) for an excellent and courageous testimony to a huge tragedy. Within a framework of cultural tradition that sacrifices the individual to collective welfare, the lack of leaders’ integrity brought nearly 300 children to a horrific death by fire. Shocking emotional interviews of victims edited with footage of the event awakens the viewer’s consciousness to necessary personal responsibility.