



RESEARCH AND NETWORKING AS THE WAY FORWARD

Oscar Hemer



In the 1990s, aspiring PhD students were encouraged not to choose 'development communication' as their subject of research (I know of at least two cases. Both students eventually became prominent scholars in the field anyway). The general assumption back then was that development communication -or ComDev, as usually referred to at Malmö University- had passed its zenith sometime in the '70s and become obsolete, just like everything else associated with 'development' and 'the third world'.

In that context, the timing might have seemed awkward when plans for the **ComDev Master** were started in Malmö in 1999. In our view, however, the moment was perfect for a radical revision. The first Master course started in 2000. Today the tenth course is in progress, more than a hundred students from all over the world have graduated from the program, and next year we will celebrate our 10th anniversary. This is in many ways a success story, and *Glocal Times* is part of it, but the purpose of this editorial is neither to boast nor to brag. It would be a mistake to settle down and be happy with what we have achieved, because the challenge is still out there. In spite of an apparent rise in interest in media and communication within development cooperation that achieved a symbolic peak in the Rome WCCD in 2006, momentum might be lost: communication is not even prioritized as a means to achieve the Millennium Goals.

While new severe communication challenges emerge all the time, development agents are poorly prepared to meet them. In some cases, the development industry itself may in fact be the main obstacle against the implementation of communication as a powerful strategy towards change.

The need for more and better research in the field is essential. Likewise, coordination of the relevant research actually being carried out around the world, but scattered among different departments with little institutional contact, is also needed.

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When we started the ComDev Master, one of the stated long-term goals was to build a research organization at Malmö University in close collaboration with regional and international partners. That goal has now started to materialize, through a series of concurring circumstances.

Thomas Tufte, now professor at Roskilde University in Denmark, has been a crucial partner in developing the curriculum of Malmö's Master program, but for many years our collaboration –his and mine- was almost entirely at the personal level. Two years ago, however, sensing yet another opportunity, we set up an institutional framework in the international research platform **Ørecomm**, grounded in the EU supported inter-regional collaboration between the universities of **Malmö (Sweden)** and **Roskilde (Denmark)**, located only 60 kms. apart on each side of the Öresund strait. The legal status of Ørecomm is yet to be defined (cross-border initiatives are always tricky to handle for nation-state bound authorities), but the platform has nevertheless expanded quickly and extended its virtual borders far beyond the Öresund region. **Member researchers and PhD students** stretch from Lillehammer in Norway to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

In connection with Ørecomm, a **Glocal Network On Media And Development (Glocal NOMAD)** is being established. Initiated as a Danish research network, linking Roskilde with the universities of Århus and Odense (South Danish University), it is expected to extend to Sweden soon to link Malmö with the universities of Karlstad and Örebro (where two ComDev graduates have recently become PhD candidates). Glocal NOMAD's intention is to link up with other networks and partners in the field and grow to be truly transnational over time.

As seen from the Öresund region, it would be an understatement to affirm that Communication for Development and Social Change is a dynamic field of research and practice. As this new issue of *Glocal Times* is published, we are busy preparing for a seminar to be held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on December 3 to 5, with the theme "Media, Empowerment and Democracy in East Africa". The activities will include the launch of the **MEDIEA** research project, involving four Ørecomm members, and the kick-off for a number of Project Works to be undertaken in East Africa by Malmö's ComDev Master students with a focus on new media and ICT.

Expect to read more about this and other developments in coming issues of *Glocal Times*. In the meantime, in this, the 13th issue of the webmag, you can get a glimpse of vibrant developments in the field in terms of theory, research and practice. Enjoy!



