



IN THIS ISSUE (NOVEMBER 2009)

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British theorist and media critic Raymond Williams first published his *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* in 1975. In that book, his discussion of the keyword communication can be traced back to the Latin “communis - common: hence communicate - make common to many, impart” (Williams, 1985). Williams states that “In controversy about communications systems and communication theory it is useful to recall the unresolved range of the original noun of action, represented at its extremes by transmit, a one-way process, and share (cf. communion and especially communicant), a common or mutual process” (ibid).

Hold on to that thought: “the unresolved range of the original noun of action”.

In their newly published book *Communication for Another Development*, Wendy Quarry and Ricardo Ramírez, both experienced independent practitioners, state provokingly: “The only sustainable aspect of Communication for Development as a field is its constant negotiation for survival” (Quarry and Ramírez, 2009).

I recently resorted to “inconsistent” as the adjective of choice in pitching the relevance of communication for development, also known as communication for social change, for a small audience of mostly uninformed scholars at the New Agendas for Global Communication conference convened by the University of Texas at Austin in October. (Establishing whether disarming honesty might work in order to get the attention of media and communication academics that see comdev/cfsc as stray distant relatives, by the way, will require additional testing).

Reflecting further, I have come to think that the field is in fact paradoxical –a condition reflected in the unresolved range of denominations available to name it, which calls for critical revision. While such condition may be obvious to many, the value of paradox for the field, however, remains somewhat undetermined.

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In this issue of *Glocal Times*, an effort was made to provide a comprehensive glimpse of the field's geometry.

Some articles portray a practice that keeps on growing strong, be it grounded in interdisciplinary creative efforts focused on advocating for more livable cities for all through communication (see Doung Jahangeer's "Media versus mall") or in social enterprise endeavors focused on generating capacity through the regular use of a methodology of choice (see Nick Lunch's "Participatory video hubs"). Lotte Dahlmann's article, "The role of media in rolling out democracy in Pakistan", in turn reminds us of the fact that media support remains an active component of the 'development' end of the field.

Research and theory-building concerns are also present. In "What's in a name", Karin Wilkins calls our attention to the shift from 'development' to 'social change' as the terminology preferred by different actors in the field lately, and problematizes 'social change', inviting deeper discussion of the binding ways in which we refer to our work than currently available.

In "Incentives and Participation in Development Communication", Emile McAnany analyzes evidence from several innovative applications of technology to development economics, equality, health, education and the environment and challenges us to envision improved and more comprehensive ways in which successful experiences can be communicated to those in need of concrete solutions to pressing problems.

In "Our petrified gardens", Susan Hayden, a graduate from Malmö University's Master in Communication for Development, explores how two popular South African television series created to address pressing health issues play a role in the rearticulation of identity after apartheid.

In "Sugar coating or the manufacture of community support", Jason Rush (also a Malmö graduate) documents how the adoption of participatory language by a government-supported partnership between a gold company and The World Bank's lending arm, International Finance Corporation, masks a situation in which a community's needs and views are consistently disregarded in the search for economic profit.

Rush evidences *a one-way process, disguised as a common or mutual process*, in which language is used to obscure what should be the field's ultimate concern when it comes to communication-bound interventions: who benefits, and who gets hurt?¹

Referring to controversy about communication theory -“the unresolved range of the original noun of action”- Williams noted that “the choice of direction is often crucial” (Williams, 1985). Uncovering the paradoxes ingrained in the field and identifying their consequences is necessary, but not enough. Documenting inventive and successful experiences is vital, but just one step. We need to map the structural conditions in which experiences take place, paying special attention to the ongoing changes in terms of the political economy of culture and the media and their impact on everyday life. If communication is to be truly strategic in addressing the many faces of inequality and the many forms of insecurity which are a by-product of globalization (Amnesty International, 2009), we must look into the consequences of paradox within the field as the point of departure for the creation of better future realities.

The next issue of *Glocal Times* will be published in March 2010. In the meantime, your comments and suggestions are welcome at florenghel@gmail.com

1. Wilkins, Karin. “New Agendas for Global Communication conference: Mobilizing for whom?” E-mail communication (October 9, 2009).

Amnesty International Report 2009.

Quarry, Wendy and Ramírez, Ricardo (2009) Communication for another development: listening before telling. London: Zed Books.

Williams, Raymond (1985, 1976) Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society. New York: Oxford University Press.

2009-11-01

