

## In (and about) this issue

By Flor Enghel<sup>1</sup>

### Looking back and looking forward: 10 years of *Glocal Times*

When [the first issue of \*Glocal Times\*](#) was published in 2005<sup>2</sup>, we stated a moderate ambition that in retrospect we seem to have achieved:

"*Globala Tider* –a Communication for Development web magazine and an archive of Master thesis in Communication for Development developed by graduates from Malmö University in Sweden (ComDev)- will attempt to become a steady forum in which academics, practitioners and students can come together to share and discuss relevant issues for the advancement of the field."

The 23 issues published during the past 10 years bear witness to the web magazine's steadiness. Thanks to the engagement of academics, practitioners and graduates from Malmö University's Master's program in Communication for Development (from now on, ComDev) and the unfailing support of ComDev staff members, it gradually became a forum known and taken into account in other spaces in the world where communication for development is taught, practiced and discussed. Low-tech and low-key, the medium grew thanks to the volunteer contributions of each and every author. To our surprise, those contributions haven't faltered in recent years<sup>3</sup> despite the meteoric rise of the publish-or-perish approach to managing academic work in the context of neoliberal capitalism.

Keen as we were on promoting public conversation, we were pleased when [Glocal Times' 2012 Special Issue](#), co-published in collaboration with the well-established academic journal [Nordicom Review](#) and featuring an internationally recognized academic expert<sup>4</sup> as guest co-editor, was expanded in 2015 into a companion [Special Issue produced by our colleagues at the Centre for Communication and Social Change](#) in the University of Queensland in Australia.

The 2012 Special Issue was a tentative step in the direction of adopting a peer review policy for academic articles, while continuing to include invited pieces authored by recognized practitioners and articles written by ComDev graduates based on their theses. The idea was to move towards a mixed model, such that the forum quality of *Glocal Times* wouldn't be lost (we thought, and we still think, that contributions written by practitioners do not need to abide by the rules of academic peer review) and at the same time the scholarly stringency of the project would be strengthened.

The idea of integrating scholarly work with practitioners' views and accounts remains desirable, and we hope that *Glocal Times'* tenth anniversary will constitute an opportunity to garner the approval and support required to go ahead from Malmö University's Faculty of Culture and Society. However, in the context of dwindling budgets and the publish-or-perish imperative

(compounded by arguments in favor of directing the scant resources available towards short-cycle, hyper-active engagement with so-called 'social media'), this vision may not materialize. The future of *Glocal Times* as from 2016 will be shaped by these factors. That there are important reasons for the web magazine not only to continue to exist, but also to restate its ambitions and continue to play an improved role as a *glocal*<sup>5</sup> forum, is what our contributors to this Anniversary Issue told us when we invited them to join us in reflecting about the past ten years, and in imagining the ten years to come.

## **Celebrating the present: In this issue**

The first thing to be said about this issue's contents is that their arrangement in a static list -the format allowed by [our Open Access publishing tool](#), typical of academic journals<sup>6</sup>- does not do justice to their richness. Importantly, the particular sequence adopted to arrange the list of contents is one among several possible others, and therefore should not be read as representative of a hierarchy.

Given the many possibilities, choosing how to go about arranging this index was not easy. Eventually, inspired by Anders Høg Hansen's reference to vinyl records in his article, I decided to adopt the structure of a music album in order to introduce the Anniversary Issue. From this perspective, the ensemble of contributions can be thought of as the 'soundtrack' of a celebration.

### *Anniversary Issue: Side A*

'Side A' includes four articles derived from the [2014 Glocal Conference on Communication for Development](#) organized by the [Ørecomm Centre for Communication and Glocal Change](#). Authored by Ph.D. candidates and by recently graduated Ph.D.s, the articles look into participatory audiovisual media.

The first two articles start from the practice and consider how to improve it. Tamara Plush asks who listens to the marginalized civic voices presumably raised through participatory video production, calling attention to the need to strengthen efforts to elicit meaningful response from the targeted audiences. Mary Mitchell introduces us to work in progress that explores the potential of collaborative interactive documentary-making as a strategy to support the struggle for justice of citizens affected by state malpractice in Peru.

The next two articles are instead concerned with establishing the legitimacy of studies of participatory audiovisual media within wider academic fields. Montero Sánchez and Moreno Domínguez focus on the interface between theory and practice characteristic of participatory video in order to attempt an analytically productive (re)definition of the term attentive to empirical variations. Villanueva Baselga argues for the validity of considering participatory video studies as a rightful component of film studies, showing that the analysis of empirical examples of collaborative video production add nuance to well-established taxonomies of documentary film.

Altogether, the four articles speak of a concern with assessing and theorizing practice in politically effective ways and invite further work in order to refine research methodologies, analyze praxis and strengthen conceptual formulations.

### *Interlude*

Anders Høg Hansen's article works as an interlude, linking 'Side A' and 'Side B' of this Anniversary Issue. The author proposes that the relationship between musical practices and social movements in contexts of socio-political disruption deserves to be investigated through the lens of communication for social change, and explores existing studies of cases across the globe that speak to his claim. His article brings to the fore the potential for cross-disciplinary integration between cultural studies and communication for development, and exemplifies ComDev's forward-looking approach to expanding the field's boundaries in the past ten years.

### *Anniversary Issue: Side B*

'Side B' of this Anniversary Issue includes sixteen "bonus" short articles. We invited authors to choose a theme or angle to reflect on the past and next ten years in connection with *Glocal Times*, and are delighted to share their responses.

We begin with the views of expert practitioners. Silvia Balit argues for the importance of maintaining a balance between adjusting to the 'new' and retaining what worked about the 'old' in seeking to address the current challenges facing commdev practitioners at present. Gordon Adam discusses the achievements of media development aimed at fostering public interest journalism in fragile states in the wider context of short-term allocations of resources and shrinking funding, calling attention to pending tasks. Wendy Quarry and Ricardo Ramírez engage in dialogue about their shared praxis and exemplify how to team up in a self-reflexive manner. Jackie Davies retraces the steps that took her from practitioner work in the field to the creation of the C4D Network via ComDev, calling for more outspoken and better strategized advocacy for commdev.

We continue with the views of academics. Thomas Hylland Eriksen draws on the notions of superdiversity and overheating to reflect on the challenge of communicating across differences and imagining a global community in contexts of increasing complexity and accelerated change. Pradip Thomas stresses the need for renewing the critical analysis of the exercise of power in the practice and the project of commdev, arguing for theorization that is contextually grounded. Thomas Tufte makes a plea for scholarly attention to bottom-up, citizen-driven communication initiatives for social change. Martin Scott calls attention to the political nature of the rhetorical struggle over the substance of commdev, highlighting that academics are responsible for the narratives they bring into play in the public arena. Karin Wilkins argues for explicating the politics contained in our conceptualizations of commdev as a productive strategy to broaden our ability to analyze interventions in socially productive ways.

The remainder of the "bonus" articles blur the boundaries between communication for development as a professional practice and a scholarly endeavor. Combining a sharp contextual

analysis with hands-on knowledge of the field of professional practice, Peter da Costa discusses opportunities and challenges for communicators working with development issues in African countries. Particularly concerned with the glocal communicational needs of people living in rural and remote locations, Helen Hambly reflects on the difficult but crucial task of training a new generation of actor scholars prepared to meet those needs. Equally concerned with the pedagogy of communication for development, ComDev staff member Hugo Boothby weaves selected articles from previous issues of *Glocal Times* into a self-reflexive account of his trajectory as a teacher, suggesting a future agenda for the theorization of the Master's program as a particular communicative ecology.

Alumna extraordinaire Rasna Warah recalls the transformative power of the very first international instance of the ComDev program back in 2002, reflecting on the specific mix of equal opportunity across borders, critical openness and technical imagination at the service of human relationships that characterized the course at the time. Exemplifying how the academic field has expanded in recent years, two ComDev alumni currently in the process of becoming PhDs -Erliza Lopez Pedersen and Rebecca Bengtsson- share their research projects and discuss how they connect to their personal, educational and professional backgrounds. To round up the ensemble of "bonus" articles, ComDev's specialist librarian Linda Karlsson reflects on how to find and share information today, combining pedagogy and service in a way that has been characteristic of the Master's program in the past ten years.

## Saying thanks

As I mentioned at the start of this column, the 23 issues of *Glocal Times* published throughout the past 10 years would not have been possible without the engagement of academics, practitioners and ComDev graduates, and the unfailing support of ComDev staff members. I'd like to take the anniversary as an opportunity to express my gratitude to each and every one of them.

Thanks are due in particular to Oscar Hemer, who had the idea to create *Glocal Times* in 2005 and invited me to become its editor shortly after I graduated from ComDev; to Micke Rundberg, who oversaw the creation of our first publishing platform; to Linda Karlsson, who liaised with the University of Gothenburg to assist us in the transition to a new platform in 2012; and to Ulla Carlsson, Jesper Falkheimer and Karin Wilkins for making the 2012 Special Issue possible. I am also grateful to Kerstin Gossé, Ann-Charlotte Ek, Ylva Ekström, Anders Høg Hansen and Hugo Boothby, who over the years have encouraged ComDev graduates to distill their Master's theses into articles for *Glocal Times*, and resorted to the web magazine as a pedagogical tool. Last but not least, thanks to Becca Bengtsson, who worked hard to ready this Anniversary Issue for publication.

The very first *Glocal Times* in 2005 included articles from Karin Wilkins, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Thomas Tufte, Gordon Adam, Linda Karlsson, Rasna Warah and Kerstin Gossé, and I am particularly delighted that all of them are part of this Anniversary Issue (Kerstin was too busy with work to write herself, but is still present through Hugo Boothby's discussion of her prior

contribution to the web magazine). Moreover, all of the authors in this issue but one are returning contributors (with Martin Scott as a welcome addition).

I take the fact that we have all remained engaged in the conversation for ten years as proof of *Glocal Times*' capacity to invite dialogue, and to listen. Whatever shape the publication takes from now on, I hope those characteristics will live on.

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<sup>2</sup> With the short-lived name "Globala Tider", in Swedish.

<sup>3</sup> We extend our sincere gratitude to those academics that have accepted our invitation to contribute in more recent years despite structural pressures to the contrary. To date, only one scholar replied that publishing in a venue that is not high-ranking journals would be a waste of his/her precious time.

<sup>4</sup> Professor Karin Wilkins, from the University of Texas at Austin in the US.

<sup>5</sup> Linking international and regional debates with the specifics of national contexts from the perspective of the Swedish development cooperation priorities, media landscape and higher education system.

<sup>6</sup> It is important to clarify that we adopted the format in 2012 at the generous offer of the Gothenburg University Library, which makes it possible for editorial boards to e-publish their journals. This was a conscious move towards securing *Glocal Times*' archive and preparing to adopt the mixed model referred to above, and we stand by it for several good reasons. That said, for this Anniversary Issue, it would have been fantastic to be able to draw on a rich media platform and an experienced designer, in order to play with images, intersections and motion.