



GLOCAL CONDITIONS

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Are you old enough to remember “the postmodern condition”? French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard coined the expression to describe the state of the world in the late 1970s. It evoked a heated discussion in arts and academia between “modernists” and “postmodernists”, culminating in the mid ‘80s. Postmodernists not only declared modernity and modernism dead; they danced on their graves, metaphorically speaking, in a spirit which at the time was characterized as “happy nihilism”.

But the end of the ‘80s saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, and “the postmodern condition” gave way to the transformational processes more accurately described as globalization.

The solemn declaration of modernity’s death was obviously premature. Like the preceding alleged death of ideologies in the 50s and impending fall of capitalism in the 60s. Or the subsequent proclamation of “the end of history”. Lyotard actually rejected the term *postmodernism*, and lucidly but somewhat obscurely talked about the postmodern as the modern at its beginning: the deconstructive impulse of modernity itself. The prefix “post”, however, was confusing and misleading. Rather than in post-modernity, we are living in hyper- or global modernity, the latter implying that we should start thinking of the modern condition in plural, as *modernities*.

Nevertheless, the post-modern debate marked a significant change. Modernity and modernism came of age and suddenly achieved awareness of their own historicity. It is possible to remember modernity although we are still in the midst of it –and by looking back and reviewing our recent modern past, we may be able to foresee and shape a different future.

Memories of Modernity is a project of cultural, artistic and academic cooperation between institutions in Malmö, Sweden, and Durban, South Africa, involving four Swedish and four South African artists and a group of Master students in Communication for Development and Cultural Production from Malmö University. The participants will soon meet for the first time during the coming ComDev seminar at Malmö University, 5-7 June.

The launching of the *Memories of Modernity* project, which will result in two exhibitions in 2007, in Durban (March) and Malmö (September), happens to coincide with a new stage in the development of this webmag, closely linked to the Master program in Communication for Development.

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Launched in 2002, before the program went international, it was initially an archive for graduates' Project Works. In June 2005, it was re-launched as a webmag. At the time we decided to keep its Swedish name, *Globala Tider*, as a vestige of its Scandinavian origin. However, we have now succumbed to the realization that a name in the global lingua franca makes the webmag more readily accessible to an international audience – and we have chosen the marker *glocal* as a substitute to global.

“Glocalization” was originally a concept used in Japanese business jargon, then adapted by American sociologist Roland Robertson to describe the dual character of globalization as being global and local at the same time. While globalization has come to be largely identified with corporate globalization from above, *glocalization* rather connotes globalization from below, which is more in line with a participatory ComDev perspective. Therefore *Glocal Times*.

This first issue of *Glocal Times* -the fourth issue of the webmag- is dedicated to one of the biggest challenges ever to communication for development and social change: the HIV and AIDS pandemic. With a few significant exceptions, HIV/AIDS communication has largely failed –a failure which calls for radical revision and rethinking of the still dominant communication strategies.

This special issue, co-edited by my colleague Thomas Tufte from Roskilde University, is the outcome of a seminar held in November 2005 in Copenhagen, organized by a health communication research program coordinated by Thomas and funded by DANIDA. It is also an example of the fruitful glocal cooperation we have established across the Öresund strait and which we intend to develop further in the coming years.

We are living in glocal times, and we are experiencing a promising momentum for the field of communication for development, with several events to take place in the coming months: in June, a workshop in Uppsala on *Media, Communication and Popular Culture in Africa*, which will be the constitutive meeting of a new Nordic research network; in July, a conference on communication for development and social change ^[1] will be held at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia; and in October, the World Congress on Communication for Development, organized by The Communication Initiative, FAO and The World Bank's Development Communication division, will be held in Rome ^[2]. In November, the *Memories of Modernity* project will move to Durban, most probably combined with a regional roundtable on communication for social change. You will see all of these events reflected in coming issues of *Glocal Times*. But start with this one. Take and read!

[1] See <http://www.sjc.uq.edu.au:9999/> for more information.

[2] See <http://www.devcomm-congress.org/worldbank/public.asp> for more information.



