

**Rethinking the interface:  
The limits and possibilities of  
communication for development**

Simon I.R.Burton

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Sociology) in the School of Human and Social Studies, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2003.

---

## Declaration

The author hereby declares that the contents of this dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, is his own work and that the thesis has not been submitted simultaneously or, at any other time, for another degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Burton', written in a cursive style.

Simon Burton

# Acknowledgements

To my family - Jennie, Jesse and Georgina, who provided the necessary 'home base' from which to launch this endeavour;

To my supervisor, Christine Stilwell, who saw possibilities when I saw problems, and who so calmly guided me on my way;

To my neighbourhood of ten years, with whom I was privileged enough to have something completely unique;

To all those who have worked with me in different ways on the studies reflected here:

Martin Wittenberg, Janet Wasko, Victoria Jama, Zwe Hulane, Heather Schreiner and Kim Jones in particular; John Gultig, Malcolm Draper and Gemma Ryan have been invaluable colleagues;

To those who have advised me, admonished me and stimulated me: Andrew Kaniki, Tessa Marcus, Peter Stopforth, Desiree Manicom, Athol Leach, Richard Clacey, Sophia Mappa, Christine MacDonald and Sandra Braman;

To all the many people with whom I have crossed paths in the course of conducting research, and have been so generous with their time and trust – thank you.

# Abstract

Development communication is now a recognized field within communication studies, but has always been implicated with the discourse and practices of development, as well as drawing on the lexicon of sociology for its elaboration of social phenomena and processes. This dissertation sets out to provide a case study-based review of the limits and possibilities of communication in/for development through the lens of interface analysis, a framework developed by Norman Long to reconstitute an understanding of development itself in an actor centered fashion. Adopting a broader based understanding of the concept of interface, in order to provide a communicative tool which goes beyond development practice, three dimensions of communication and development are considered: the ‘dominant paradigm’ with its emphasis on mass media; participatory communication with its emphasis on dialogue and social change; and communication based on new information and communication technologies, with its emphasis on the benefits of the internet. Central to the discussion is a consideration of the significance of information in developing contexts, and the centrality of communication to social relations more generally. Each of the case studies provides a concrete example of one or more of the three dimensions outlined above, and offers a platform for extending a conceptual and critical engagement with past contributions to the particular problematic. The objective of these engagements is less the establishment of firm conclusions than it is with the delineation of further topics for research, and the clarification of the future direction of communication in/for development.

# Contents

Declaration.....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Contents .....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1.....	9
Introduction .....	9
Case Study 1: Mass media and political information .....	18
Case Study 2: Disney in South Africa .....	36
Concluding remarks.....	51
Chapter 2.....	55
Communication and Development .....	56
Case Study 3: Community Videomaking .....	64
Interrogating some South African issues .....	73
Case study 4: Rural Information.....	91
Development Support Communication .....	100
Case study 5: The ESTA Campaign .....	115
Case Study 6: The African Renaissance Project .....	129
Concluding comments .....	151
Chapter 3.....	157
Information superhighways and cul de sacs.....	157
Case Study 7: The Mbazwana Study .....	166
Of telecentres and networks.....	187
Case Study 8: Telecentre at Bhamshela.....	196
Case Study 9: The Msunduzi Community Network Project.....	201
Conclusions .....	226
Concluding remarks.....	228
References.....	241

# Introduction

The title of this dissertation, “ Rethinking the interface – the limits and possibilities of communication for development”, is suggestive of a definitive project in which failures of the past can, and ought to be, rectified. In this it cannot succeed, for it offers only a partial understanding of the phenomenon (communication for development), rooted in a particular time and place. At the same time however, it seeks to elucidate some of the debates and controversies, as well as concepts, practices and results, of communication initiatives within a developing context. The major problems/questions driving the production of this work has been the apparent ease with which discussions about the field of communication for development have been compartmentalized (Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada 1998: 224), the ubiquity of the use of certain concepts (like ‘participation’) regardless of the lack of general agreement about what they mean (Dagron 2001: 8; White 1994), and a sense of the coming of age of the field itself (for example, the adoption of the term to describe development interventions by actors and agencies at all levels of society).

The dissertation is primarily concerned with communication. While the major concern is with something loosely called ‘development communication’ it covers aspects of the communication studies field which includes the mass media, directed communication, participatory communication, and new information technologies. Each of these areas of communication practice (and this is by no means a complete list) has fairly distinctive characteristics, and a body of accessible intellectual commentary that qualifies them as sub-fields of communication studies. However, as we shall see, communication studies, broadly

defined, are grappling with sharp methodological and paradigmatic questions. Not least of these questions is that of the human-machine (technology) interface: a field of research with a long history, and one which is currently deeply engrossed in clarifying the emerging realities associated with new information and communication technologies (ICT's) (see Biocca 1993).

The field of development studies too, is in the midst of a series of conversations about what constitutes *real* development, or *authentic* development. The continuing academic and international debates, as well as the sheer scale and geopolitical significance of the sector itself, attest to the complexity inherent in even the most basic characterization of the phenomenon. However, the primary object of study here is not 'development' per se, but an exploration of modes of thinking about the role of communication in/for development, in the context of real examples drawn from our own society. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the discourse of communication in/for development embroils us in the debates and issues surrounding development, and that communication itself facilitates the discourse(s) and practice of 'development' (see Hobart 1993). It is not appropriate then to conceive of communication as something that comes after development (as may sometimes be surmised by the way development discourse and practice chooses to foreground some, rather than other issues) – nor is it possible to separate the two domains except analytically.

The underlying approach to the endeavour is sociological. At the most fundamental level (before the theoretical languages take hold), this means providing a framework within which to think about complex human affairs. It means providing a balanced view of how people act

within the world as an interpreted and material reality. There is no argument here for a particular brand of sociology, nor is there a major theoretical contribution. In defence of these disclaimers, this work does not claim very much either. From all the multitude of realities, layers and levels that constitute the *social*, unpacking ‘communication in/for development’ is not going to refute long held beliefs or reconfigure the discourses and practices that are currently favoured. This is not a neutral terrain. While it is true that the three classical perspectives of Marx, Weber and Durkheim have provided the map, and the sociological problematic of action and structure the topography, the dissertation does not seek more than a set of critiques, and the selective use of some interesting concepts, such as culture, interface and affordances: all of which are embedded in the fundamental question of sociology, which is to delineate the social as a real object of knowledge.

Sociology, development and communication: each of these three broad intellectual trajectories has its own history, methods, controversies and philosophical underpinnings. The interdisciplinarity, of studying communication in/for development, has long been recognized although in reality this is often not the case (see Lie 1997). The dissertation therefore seeks to provide a platform upon which to reflect on topics that have been more systematically analysed within their discrete academic terrains. For this reason, the following pages are largely concerned with case studies that collectively add something to our understanding of the collision points (Norman Long’s ‘discontinuities’) of these three intellectual domains.



The idea of the 'interface' of the title refers therefore to more than simply a conceptual 'rubbing together' of fields of knowledge (as in the commonsense notion of bridging or linking systems), but also serves to highlight the interpenetration of these three domains of thought.

.....

Nicholas Garnham (2000) has recently provided a defence of communication studies from a neo-Kantian perspective in which he suggests our humanity is founded on our ability to mobilize our mental capacities (our brains essentially) in the production of symbolic communication, which is essential for social life.

A further essential feature of our humanity is the indeterminacy of human affairs. The classical position in sociology, positing as it does a range of explanatory schema for the absolute description of social matters (however defined), has always been threatened by a culturalist position which focuses on the intersection of structure and agency, rather than the essential continuity between them (causally, as a model, rationalistically and so on). This position has been considerably strengthened by thinkers grappling with the formulations of modernity and its characteristics, like Foucault and Goffman, and postmodernists whose urge to inject indeterminacy into our sociological conversations is as much a political position as it is a theoretical contribution.

In our deliberations, what we cannot avoid is the social, and the relationships that construct it. Ien Ang has pushed this hard in her seminal essay *In the Realm of Uncertainty: the*

*Global Village and Capitalist Postmodernity* (1994), in which she resorts to chaos theory as a foundational discourse for social analysis, arguing, in a James Cary mould, that communication *is* culture, and the simultaneous accomplishment a fragile one. The social as an experienced reality is full of surprises (and regularity), and our communication capacities are both its foundation and result. Ang's arguments hinge on her rejection of the transmission metaphor that underpins many of the formal models of communication (and which becomes a defining metaphor of capitalism itself, embodied in the space binding technologies of the telegraph and railroad), and her embrace of a radical semiotic democracy which precludes definite measurement (of an audience, for example). She argues that 'meanings' are "not determined by fixed predispositions but take shape within the dynamic and contradictory goings-on of everyday life and history" (1994: 203). This is a contested argument, which draws us into a debate about the modalities of power. Carey himself was acutely aware of this, suggesting that, "Reality is a scarce resource....the fundamental form of power is the power to define, allocate, and display that resource" (1989: 87).

This inversion of the classical sociological option - the limitation of the object of knowledge to the (sometimes hidden) operation of some named phenomenon: rationalization, the mode of production or forms of solidarity, for example - has been much debated in the literature on 'development' as well. But as a deep social practice, development (as a concept and practice) will inevitably be both a subject and object in much the same way as communication is (see Escobar 1997).

By adopting a perspective which draws heavily on case studies, the current work is not making a very strong case for adopting a strict (consistent, logical and open) methodology. Some questions and issues surrounding the different methodologies used in accomplishing the research are offered, but the framework adopted here does not engage systematically with the question of methodology.

There has been, and continues to be, a great deal of debate over the correct methods of researching all three fields of study. One could make an argument for the naïve approach (driven by curiosity rather than a paradigmatic approach) to conducting research, not least on political or emancipatory grounds. This approach is underpinned by Flyvbjerg's (2001) defense of a phronetic social science, drawing on the works of Bourdieu, Bellah and Rorty, but rooted in Aristotle's notion of *phronesis*, an intellectual virtue which is pragmatic, variable and context dependent (2001: 57). Based on case studies,

it explores historic circumstances and current practices to find avenues to praxis. The task of phronetic social science is to clarify and deliberate about the problems and risks we face and to outline how things may be done differently, in full knowledge that we cannot find ultimate answers to these questions or even a single version of what the questions are" (2001: 140).

Increasingly, the veracity of social scientific methods is dependent on systematic consent, or 'what is allowed'. The (partial) subject of the dissertation is precisely the reconstruction of knowledge circuits and legitimation, in an era in which knowledge or information are increasingly becoming the tags with which we construct the notion of 'society'.

At best such an approach should deliver some interesting findings, which should in turn provoke some discussion. In some respects all the diverse questions of communication

studies, development and sociology are rooted in the conversations that actors have, based on that unique quality of symbolic communication celebrated by Garnham (2000).

.....

Each of the three following chapters is built around case studies.

In the first chapter, we begin with a reflection on the state of theorising communications studies, and how this is related to some controversies in sociology. This is followed by two case studies which are concerned with the mass media, and the problematic of social structural determination of media effects and reception. The central issues here are the significance of group identity/position in the consumption of media, and its influence on attitudes to violence on the one hand, and consumption of popular culture on the other. These studies were conducted in 1991/2 and 1998/9 respectively, and carry the traces of intellectual pre-occupations, and political circumstances. Where possible an attempt has been made to identify resonances with contemporary circumstances.

In chapter two, the subject is development communication. Here an overview of the different paradigms of development communication is offered, and a critical exploration of a number of issues relating to community videomaking, rural information and current conceptions of development support communication. Research for the case studies included in the chapter was conducted between 1994 and the present.

In chapter three, the theme is new information and communication technologies (ICT's) as they relate to development communication. Case studies of rural information needs, telecentres and networks are offered, as well as some commentary on the framework of ICT mobilisation for development. Research for this chapter has been ongoing since 1998.

It would be inappropriate to suggest that there is one pervasive argument linking these different cases studies together. While it is true to say that each constitutes a particular embodiment of the notion of 'interface', each study in turn demonstrates the elusive quality of the concept, drawing down different characteristics, as on to a stage, where they perform. Different communication practices play by different rules, and offer us a range of stages. For the broadcast media, production is everything. For new information technologies, access is paramount. For development support communication, the mutual goal is the prize. Of course, many of the same players cross all the stages, but not necessarily with the same lines, and it would be inconsiderate to assemble all the players and expect them to make sense of each other's parts.

One central aspect of all the studies that are captured here is to try and show how some characters are in fact in the wrong show. This is not an effort to find the secret ingredient that allows us to provide one frame of reference for everything that goes under the heading of development communication. At the same time, by elaborating and exploring concepts, practices and ideas, we may provide a broader canvass on which to project our insatiable urge to get things right.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

As South Africa undergoes a profound political and social transformation towards an inclusive democracy<sup>1</sup>, the mass media as one of the central state (and market) institutions has fallen under the spotlight. This has taken the form, on the one hand, of a wide-ranging policy debate, and more recently institutional reorganisation (see Louw 1993; Barnett 1999; Fourie 2001) and on the other hand, a resurgence of interest and application in using both ‘big’ and ‘small’ media for development and education (see Jabulani! 1991), by a wide range of organisations, some forged in the anti-Apartheid struggle and others capitalising on the political space created in the course of negotiations. A similar process can be seen to be taking place in a range of other institutions (e.g. education, economy, health etc) which are no longer able to function as authoritarian ‘exclusive’ structures of the ‘weak state’ that was the Apartheid machinery.

As has been argued elsewhere (Burton et al., 1993), the central elements of theorising the likely outcome of such an institutional and organisational restructuring are first, a clear analysis of the balance of forces between market, state and civil organisation, and secondly an assessment of the degree to which discourses of ‘development’, ‘democracy’, ‘reconstruction’ and so on are transformed so as to place agency at their heart. The former says something about the possible course of events, and the underlying dominant forces at

---

<sup>1</sup> The research for the first case study was conducted in the early 1990s and reflects some of the political imperatives of the day, although the general comments offered here could also be seen as having a certain veracity at the close of the decade. A clear chronology, and engagement with the salience of the categories of analysis employed here can be found in Tomaselli and Dunn (2001).

work. Furthermore, it may be possible to delineate forms of action, which, while by no means only a signifier of individual action (its modalities), are an important part of the conversation about agency (and its limitations, for its potential is limitless). Without categories of agency (be they as wildly idiosyncratic as those of some structuralists – Althusser for example), such an analysis of the market, state and civil society is not possible. What acts on what?

Similarly, the question of discourse(s) and an agency perspective drives into the ideological heart of the struggle for democracy in South Africa, and the construction of a legitimate palette of actors in this process (big business, the government, donors etc).

While it is obvious that policy formulation, practice and analysis, and state-bureaucratic re-organisation have been high on the agenda in this period, the necessity of re-formulating the dynamics of state-citizen relations (in terms of both democracy and development) has not been lost sight of, nor left for the new state alone to dictate. This is significant, as by taking into account the experiences resulting from a failure to reconceptualise these relationships, South Africa has reduced the risk of becoming another Third World development catastrophe, characterised by arbitrary state intervention, opening the door to a New Right, market-driven ideology of development (with its own abysmal track record) (see De Janvry et al., 1993). The crucial losses sustained by our not insubstantial civil organisations, which have been so central to the downfall of Apartheid, cannot be explained in this way.

The literature on development has, in recent years, made a significant contribution to our understanding of these relationships. Until fairly recently, politicians, policy makers and policy analysts have treated the relationship between institution and agency as largely unproblematic (see Marcus 1994). The underlying assumption was that policy formulation and implementation is linear: decisions are made at the policy level, translated into procedures at the organisational level and produce the desired or intended affects at the operational level (see Cramb and Wills 1990). The focus is on 'decisions', and academic research efforts are largely directed at ensuring that decisions are made on the basis of sound analysis/research. This confuses 'good analysis' with 'good policy' - and sidelines the recipients of policy, making them passive targets.

An agency perspective on the other hand, posits implementation as the most crucial aspect of the policy process, and is concerned with the struggles, negotiations and exchanges occurring within and between social groups, networks of individuals, classes and so on. Norman Long (1988) has developed this perspective into what he calls 'interface analysis', which seeks to unite agency and structuralist approaches, recognising the limitations of focusing on actor strategies without locating these interactions in a context which accounts for structural constraints on choice and strategy. This perspective on development practice is more fully developed in Chapter 2.



It is significant however, that the same kinds of issues constitute a field of discussion across disciplines, and particularly into media and communication studies. For example, Murdock has argued that

the relations between structure and action ... now constitutes the central problem for social theory [and that] this problem lies at the heart of not just media research but also of the human sciences more generally, and presents both the greatest challenge to anyone specialising in the social investigation of communication and the best opportunity to reconnect our particular concerns to general developments in social science to the mutual benefit of both (1990: 3).

A further, significant, entry point into the way in which the field of communication studies views and interpolates the structure/action discourse is the prestigious American published *Journal of Communication*, which devoted, in the early 1990s, two issues to a “collective reconnaissance of communication scholarship and its future” (Levy and Gurevitch 1993: 4). Entitled *The Future of the Field - Between Fragmentation and Cohesion*, the articles, the editors believe, “look like the field” (Levy and Gurevitch 1993: 4).

It may be presumptuous to read these articles as reflecting a position in communication studies, around which one can (or should) develop a critique. It is obvious that they do not constitute an argument, which presses an analytic case for communications studies in the 1990s and beyond. Nevertheless, in all their complexity and range, they display tendencies which it is important to identify.

Of particular interest are the theoretical foundations of a study of communications which can (and does) adequately capture, conceptualise, describe and enhance our understanding of communication in order that we may better contribute that knowledge to what Giddens calls

“contingent moral rationalism” (Giddens, in Held and Thompson 1989: 291), or a critical project. Essentially, this is an intellectual exercise rather than one which seeks to marry means and ends in the hurly burly of constructing institutions and frameworks for the management of media and communications.

Throughout the contributions on the topic of the ‘Disciplinary Status of Communication Research’ is a pervasive sense of pessimism with regard to a paradigmatic unity of communication research direction. While each author finds a more or less interesting and compelling approach to solving this difficulty, there are some general problems identified as central to this state of fragmentation. A brief summary of the contributions shows how succinctly Murdock (1990) has captured the state of play.

Karl Erik Rosengren (1993) argues that the preoccupation of the sociology of the 1970s with debates in a radical change versus social regulation dimension has now been eclipsed (through global political and intellectual change) by an objectivist versus subjectivist dimension which locates the acting and willing subject as the ontological basis for growth in communication research. Furthermore, these humanistic/subjectivist research trajectories are incapable of co-operating (or confronting) more structuralist/objectivist research orientations because of their suspicion of quantification, and more precisely, their avoidance of formal models. Models, he argues, are a vital element, along with substantive theories and empirical data, of all research. These views are supported by Kurt and Gladys Lang (1993), who equate theorising with model building. Throughout Rosengren's (1993) brief overview of ‘uses and gratifications’ research, lifestyle-oriented research, and reception theory, he does

not specify what is meant by a formal model except to distinguish levels of complexity (from simple cross-tabulation to advanced multi-variate statistical modelling). His suggestion is that humanistically oriented communications scholars must overcome their aversion to formal models, which presumably will lead to some friendly croaking between what are, at present, isolated frog ponds.

James Beniger makes the point that the most significant models (of information processing and communication) remain linear and rooted in what he calls 'the three R's': readin' (input and decoding), writin' (encoding and output) and 'rithmetic (computation and decoding), themselves the "outmoded baggage of the late 1940s" (1993: 19). Robert Craig suggests that communication researchers have contributed more and better original theory in recent years, but have become less certain of exactly what they are doing or should be doing (1993: 26) because basic questions about theory are now open and unsettled. In an elegant argument he locates this problem in an essential transformation of the human sciences arising out of the blurring of the distinction between the social sciences and the humanities. Developing the ideas of Clifford Geertz, he isolates the rhetorical and discursive features of theory as having severely compromised the old epistemological criteria underpinning our definitions of theory (falsifiability, scientific explanation). Add to this the return of speculative social theory (Habermas, Giddens, Foucault), increased appreciation of qualitative methods (ethnography, discourse analysis), and the increased attention to the historical dimension of social processes, and one "calls into question the metatheoretical vocabulary of explanatory scientific theory in social science" (Craig 1993: 30).

Brenda Dervin correctly identifies the practise of various other forms of theorising - sociological, psychological, anthropological - as part of the problem facing communication theory and research (1993: 46), and asks: What if we were able to develop communication theory for communication practice? In an upbeat and constructive attempt to demolish 'false dichotomies' (such as culture vs. individual, structure vs. agency, power vs. freedom) which is a narrative structure leading back to sociology, she argues that

we fail to fully capitalise on our understanding of the role of communication in the implementation of order as well as disorder, structure as well as agency, constraint as well as freedom, homogeneity as well as difference (1993: 50).

Elsewhere she remarks, "communicating is where the micro becomes the macro, the macro the micro. It is the in between, the doing, the making, the experiencing" (1993: 52). In fact, she goes so far as to suggest that theorists (such as Giddens and Habermas) from other social sciences point to communication as a way out of their own substantial and/or illusive polarities.

While Dervin seeks to unify communications theory and research by focusing inwards, on communication itself, and thereby banishing the polarities characteristic of 'parent' social scientific enterprises, the general consensus appears to be that these polarities are here to stay. Joli Jensen suggests that

we cannot escape the endlessly interesting epistemological divide between objectivism and expressivism, between belief in an neutral world out there that waits for us to know it and belief in a world that is constituted in our knowing it (1993: 69).

Also pushing firmly down the fragmentation road, Gregory Shepherd provides a useful archaeology of the way in which words/languages have been conceived as little more than vehicles for thoughts/ideas/intentions from John Locke onward. In consequence, communication has no ontological basis in modernity. In summary he argues “as a vehicle, communication has no existential status in modernity: from modernity's point of view, then, how can there be a discipline of communication” (1993: 87).

This emphasis on method, theory, ontology and epistemology, variously marshalled in a number of interpretative frames does not appear to be that different from the kinds of metatheoretical problems that have plagued sociology (and other core social sciences) from time to time (see Barnes 2000; Ashe et al., 1999). David Rubinstein, whose work will be more fully explored in Chapter Three, remarks in his Preface, that “This book engages a long standing controversy in sociological theory: the debate between those who believe behaviour is mainly controlled by cultural training and those who emphasise the priority of social structure” (2000: ix).

Nevertheless, controversies in the social sciences are a crucial source of imagery for communication studies. Beniger's (1993) work stands out in its efforts to rethink the fundamental categories of communication research, and turns to those disciplines where totalising theory has a long and chequered career. His approach, like that of Dervin, emphasises less the metatheoretical and more the pragmatics of communication studies: Beniger seeks to enhance theoretical leads (the study of culture, control, cognition and communication) residing elsewhere in the data, models, concepts and theory of many

disciplines; Dervin seeks to rethink communications without the undue influence of many of the 'old' social scientific hang-ups. Her primary task is to show the epistemological and ontological commitments associated with different approaches to communication studies. This too is a feature of much of the writing of 'communication for development': spelling out the implications of adopting particular approaches (Jacobsen and Servaes 1999).

Whatever the particular trajectory within communication studies, or its fragmentation for that matter, the discussion goes forward on the state of play. For example, David Morley has suggested, in a context of evaluating approaches to audience research, which in many respects constitutes the central site of debates around action and structure,

the pendulum has now swung so far [from overly structuralist approaches] that we face the prospect of a field dominated by the production of micro (and often ethnographic) analyses of media consumption processes, which add up only to a set of micronarratives, outside of any effective macropolitical or cultural frame (1993: 16).

It is clear then, that both the fields of development and aspects of media/communication studies are grappling with similar difficulties in resolving the agency/structure tension. This is of course not a new problem, but one which has unfolded in these particular fields relatively recently.

These debates, carried through the 1990s by the growing concern with globalisation and the runaway 'information revolution', are increasingly sharpened in a South African context by the emerging commitment to a media/communications terrain tasked with bridging the transition to a full democracy, with all that this implies from an institutional and organisational perspective (see Barnett 2001).

The two case studies that follow demonstrate the significance of social structure for any understanding of media effects or media reception. They serve as exemplars of the argument that “such effects – whether interpretative or behavioural - are mediated by social location and group affiliation” (Garnham 2000: 111). There is evidence from both cases that such mediation is rooted in group experiences, and that the mass media neglects these issues at the risk of distorting the claims it makes about neutrality.

The first, a case study of simple quantitative design, explores the tension between an aggregated or structural reading of media influence or power and the different realities constructed by the epistemology of racial classification. The second, based on similar methodological principles, seeks to complicate questions of media influence by raising issues of culture.

### *Case Study 1:*

## **Mass media and political information**

Since the watershed speech of President De Klerk in February 1990 opened the way to a negotiated democracy in South Africa, the role of the mass media has, predictably, been under the spotlight. Public scrutiny and debate has centred on the future of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), which delivered, at that historical moment, three licence-driven television channels and twenty-two FM radio stations to a combined audience of close to twenty million listeners/viewers every day. It is widely accepted that National Party

control of the electronic media has been an essential aspect of the reproduction of Apartheid and, by implication, a significant pillar of Apartheid ideology (Burton and Gultig 1993).

Efforts to dismantle this domination of the airwaves have been both institutional and organisational. The former has led to the restructuring of the SABC Board which oversees the operation of the SABC, the establishment institutions of public recourse (such as the Media Monitoring Commission to ensure media 'fairness' in the pre-election period, and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission today), and legislation to create an Independent Broadcasting Authority (to re-license broadcasters and redefine the use of the airwaves). The latter impulse saw the consolidation of opponents of Apartheid media into organisations such as the Campaign for Open Media and the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting, as well as an explosion of co-ordination and training bodies like the Media Institute of Southern Africa, Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, and various issue based groups in education, research and monitoring.

The critical studies of the press and electronic media associated with this organisational response display an essential continuity with efforts to show how the media contributed to the maintenance of Apartheid. The central features of these studies - and the organisational strategies which flow from them - are their institutional orientation, and emphasis on the structure of media ownership/management (Louw 1993). In many cases this approach borders on conspiracy theory, which fails to specify the relationship between social structure and attitudes or perceptions. While these institutional studies have been thorough and incisive, the identification of bias in the media is underwritten by an assumption of media



effects which closely resembles the 'hypodermic' approach. This has resulted from a failure to adequately conceptualise the South African media audience in all its pluralistic glory. The 'audience' has been the subject of endless research - ratings and readership/listenership surveys are rife - but a significant absence remains in the area of relating media message consumption, and the context within which this takes place, to the likely outcome of such consumption. In fact, John Thompson has argued that

Given the growing importance of the media in the modern world, I want to conclude by suggesting that many of the key questions of culture and cultural analysis today can be defined in terms of the interface between the information and symbolic content produced and transmitted by the media industries, on the one hand, and the routine activities of everyday life into which media products are incorporated by recipients, on the other (1994: 44).

Turning away from the number crunching, atheoretical empiricism of the period up to the 1970s, critical media studies in the 1980s looked to semiotics and cultural studies as approaches more likely to provide a framework which would reveal the inner workings of ideological production. As Stuart Hall said of semiotics, "a new and exciting phase in so-called audience research of a quite new kind, may be opening up" (Hall 1980: 131).

In large part however, semiotics has remained part of an institutional analysis of the media - analysing the messages sent by somebody (usually the ideological apparatus of the capitalist class) rather than an analysis of the way in which codes (and therefore meanings) are simultaneously created and interpreted. This two-way process implied in semiotics has been harnessed, in the main, to the critique of ideological production. Consequently the study of the text has become something of a fetish in some quarters - and the 'reader' - the other half of the original two way process - has tended to be ignored. There have been numerous

examples where criticising the message has been enough and the real effect or impact of the message itself on the audience or reader, assumed! (Lewis 199; Keene-Young 1992; Slovo 1992; Russell 1992; Posel 1990).

The corollary of this has been to view the audience as undifferentiated - or on occasion stereotyped for a political purpose. This may be acceptable as political tactics (discredit the enemy through a fanciful show of the collective horror etc.) but should not, ultimately establish the limits of studies of the role and impact of the media in society.

## **The Research**

These research findings are the results of an attempt to establish where members of the White and Indian communities get their information about political violence in their home town of Pietermaritzburg (PMB), and whether or not these sources influence attitudes towards political violence. PMB, eighty kilometres north of the port of Durban, on the eastern seaboard of South Africa, was the site of political violence between 1985 and the mid 1990s. While there remains a heated debate about who is to blame for this 'civil war', the facts of death, destruction of property and economic damage in the area are incontrovertible.

The initial 'drop off and pick up' survey of 403 randomly selected households falling within the boundaries of the then White Group Area (with randomisation of respondents over 18 years of age in each household) was conducted in September 1990. At this time 'White' Pietermaritzburg had a population of around 60 000. The return rate for the survey was 60%.

Initial results reveal the following:

- 44% of White respondents cited the mass media (newspapers, television and radio) as their main source of information about political violence in PMB.
- 33% of White respondents cited contacts<sup>2</sup> with fellow human beings as their main sources of information about political violence in PMB.
- 10% of White respondents cited both contacts and media as their main sources of information about political violence in PMB.
- 13% of White respondents declined to specify.
- Newspapers were cited as the main source of information about political violence twice as often as television.

A second survey of 501 randomly selected households (with a randomisation of persons over the age of 18 years in each household) was conducted within the Indian Group Area boundaries (within which the vast majority of Indian people continue to reside), in June 1991. This 'Indian' population of Pietermaritzburg also comprised about 60 000 people. The return rate for the survey was 95% because fieldworkers remained with respondents while the questionnaire was completed. Initial results revealed the following:

- 72% of Indian respondents cited the mass media (newspaper, TV and radio) as their main source of information about political violence in PMB.

---

<sup>2</sup> Contact refers to information from domestic workers, work colleagues and others at work, friends, family, or have witnessed violence themselves.

- 15% of Indian respondents cited contacts as their main source of information about political violence in PMB.
- 7% of Indian respondents cited both contacts and mass media as their main sources of information about political violence in PMB.
- While newspapers were cited as a main source of information by 63% of Indian respondents, TV was cited by 46% of respondents.

A striking feature of the White attitudinal survey is the high proportion of respondents who cited contacts as their main source of information, rather than the mass media. These findings are quite different from those established in the course of the Indian attitudinal survey.

For that category of White respondents for whom *contact* was the main source of information, the following emerged:

- They are less likely than those who cite mass media as the main source of information to see the toll of 2500 dead as exaggerated (see below).
- They are more likely than those who cite mass media as the main source of information to believe that the violence started before 1987.

Checking *contact* as the main source of information against a category of questions which sought to establish where White respondents hear about violence, and the reliability of the information they get, the following emerged:

- White respondents citing contacts as the main source of information are less likely to cite TV as reliable.
- White respondents citing contacts as the main source of information are less likely to cite newspapers as reliable.

Finally, on the basis of White respondents' political affiliations, it was established that those to the left of government (African National Congress/United Democratic Front and Democratic Party supporters)

- are less likely to cite TV as the main source of their information
- are more likely to believe that the violence started before 1989.

It would seem that there was, at this time, a large grouping within the White community which cannot be isolated by basic categories of sex, education level, income and age, who do not appear to take the media as a source of information as seriously as it would its every day communicative network. Political attitudes may be decisive here - and this will have to be tested more thoroughly in the future.

On completion of the survey amongst Indian residents in PMB, we were intrigued by the significantly higher proportion of respondents who perceive the mass media as their main source of information about political violence in PMB (nearly double), and the correspondingly smaller proportion that cited contacts as their main source.

Initial tests of data obtained in the survey of Indian residents, to establish relationships between mass media and contacts as the main source of information and attitudinal items (such as perceptions of the accuracy, or otherwise of the death toll, and when the violence started), as well as reliability of sources, proved fruitless.

However some simple comparisons between White and Indian residents do begin to provide some interesting points of departure.

The comparison that proved to be most stimulating relates to the question asked of all respondents – ‘Where do you hear about the political violence?’ and the invitation to score the reliability of the information received from these sources. These results are tabulated below.

**Table 1: Where do you hear about the violence?**

	White Respondents (n=242)	Indian Respondents (n=476)
Newspapers	85%	93%
Television	82%	92%
Radio	70%	74%

These responses are predictably high, but indicate a stronger media ‘attachment’ on the part of Indian respondents.

Moving on to the reliability of these sources, the results are surprising to say the least. We recorded only the 4 and 5 ratings of a scale 1-5, unreliable to reliable. These results are tabulated below.

**Table 2: Reliability of sources of information about the violence.**

	White Respondents (n=242)	Indian Respondents (n=476)
Newspapers	33%	60%
Television	35%	65%
Radio	28%	51%

The implications of this finding are puzzling, but do suggest that a perception exists among Indian respondents that the mass media should be taken more seriously than is the case for White respondents.

For both White and Indian respondents these reliability levels are significantly higher than those found for information from family and friends.

Two further comparisons were undertaken. Comparisons between White and Indian respondents responses to the question, ‘when did violence in and around PMB become serious?’ show a striking difference between the two groups, with 60% of White respondents seeing it as becoming serious in 1988 or before, while 51% of Indian respondents see it as becoming serious in 1989 and after.

Similarly, comparing White respondents with Indian respondents responses to the question, 'Is the violence in PMB worse than violence in other parts of South Africa?', we note some differences, with 42% of White respondents answering in the affirmative as against 27% of Indian respondents.

Finally a death toll was selected from the most systematic literature available (2 500 since 1987 for the White attitude questionnaire, and 2 700 since 1987 for the Indian attitude questionnaire) (Aitchison 1990; Aitchison 1991) and respondents were then asked to assess whether it was *accurate*, *exaggerated* or *underestimated*. Differences on accuracy and exaggeration were small, but 39% of White respondents felt the toll was underestimated as against 55% of Indian respondents who also felt it was underestimated.

Before moving to attempt interpretation it is important to point out that the questionnaires revealed some important differences between the samples.

- While the survey conducted in White residential areas gave an even break down of male and female respondents, the survey conducted in the Indian residential areas was skewed towards male respondents (60% to 40%).
- White respondents were generally older (mean age 42 years) than Indian respondents (mean age 34 years).
- White respondents were better educated (75% with matriculation) than Indian respondents (45% with matriculation).



- White respondents were in a vastly superior position with respect to monthly household income.

As has already been indicated no significant relationship between any of these factors and respondents choice of main source of information has been found.

## **Theoretical Approaches**

In as much as the violence in and around Pietermaritzburg has cast a shadow on all its peoples, and has constituted a major crisis for the city, the Black community in particular, this research has substantiated the view that,

recent research continues to support earlier findings that interpersonal as well as broadcast media are primary sources of information during crisis events (Johnston 1990: 336).

However, this violence may not easily be characterised as an event 'in reality', but a process which has been shredded by the media coverage into a series of episodes (or events). We know very little about how much coverage of this violence there has been in the media or the way it has been presented. Ruth Tomaselli's work (1988) on one SABC programme dealing with the violence in PMB is one of the few examples of a close scrutiny of the way the issue of violence has been handled. Nevertheless, the research does throw up the serious question of why a differential proportion of interpersonal and broadcast media information exists between the two groups.

One direction to be followed in seeking an answer is provided by Morley (1990: 138) when he suggests that:

Broadcasting (along with other domestic technologies of communication) has, therefore, to be understood as enmeshed within the internal dynamics of the organisation of domestic space (and primarily with reference to gender relations).

Morley, along with a host of media researchers (Lull 1990; Lewis 1991) have been drawn to that sociological work analysing leisure and the transformation of the relations between public and private spheres - particularly, space. This line of thinking draws us back to the home, and the significance of domestic arrangements as sources of social imagery and power relations. Martin Wittenberg's work (based on the same survey of White attitudes in PMB) is a useful illustration of the way in which neighbourhood and social identity are crucially linked through the notion of "local dependence" (Wittenberg 1999: 9).

Another orientation which may have some contribution to make to analysing these results is that which argues that proximity (of which geographical location is one element) is an essential variable in assessing the degree to which media contributes to an individual's construction of subjective reality (Cohen et al., 1989: 37). While this may sound like nothing more than common sense, it is interesting to note the findings of a major international research project which states that:

The findings of this study also reinforced the notion that people are able to make distinctions between the way television presents various aspects of the 'real' world and what they think the world is really like. This has been found to be particularly manifest in the case of South Africa, where the gap between the way social conflicts are perceived to be in the real world and in the world of television news was the most salient. (Cohen et al., 1989: 160)

Yes, South Africa with its legacy of segregation and Apartheid, certainly does display significant features of cultural and social divisions with a clear spatial ordering to them. But

Cohen (et al., 1989) also ascribes a psychosocial context dimension to this idea of proximity. In fact, Barrie Gunter has gone even further, arguing that the understanding of information losses (and by implication, knowledge acquisition) from TV bulletins “requires conceptualisation in cognitive-psychological terms rather than just in sociological ones” (Gunter 1991, 256).

Finally, it is worth looking more closely at the issue of the balance between the ‘real’ and the ‘symbolic’ (in the form of the media), for as Behr and Iyengar (1985: 53) have observed,

Real world conditions and events provide an independent impetus to the perceived importance of issues. Moreover, since news coverage of issues is to a significant extent determined by actual conditions, analyses of media agenda setting that ignore real world conditions will arrive at seriously inflated estimates of media influence.

## **Discussion**

First, there is something to be said for an approach which explores the structure of public and private space, and which is sensitive to the proximity of individuals to real conditions in assessing media usage and influence (see Gumpert and Drucker 1991).

The structure of public and private space is different for the two groups investigated. The White community, through the benefits it has reaped from segregation and Apartheid, does have access to more public amenities - for leisure, sports and entertainment, and may not be wedded to either the mass media as leisure pursuit or information source to quite the same degree as the Indian community, which had been systematically dispossessed of its access to public space. We are on tricky ground here, for while this has been the case, it is beginning to change quite rapidly with the integration of residential areas closer to the city, as well as

changes of education and income levels among younger people. The point is that there has never been the pressure on the White community to turn domestic space into public space, even though its affluence allows it the luxury of choosing to do so. But this really only tells us of the potential for mass media to play a larger role in the Indian community.

Furthermore, there is a vibrant associational life in the Indian community which may in fact nullify this loose hypothesis.

Secondly, in terms of proximity to real conditions, there does not seem to be much in it - both White and Indian communities are literally miles away from the townships, which are the predominant site of violence. In fact, it may be that the Indian community is closer to violence, particularly in the PMB situation where many African people will shop in a section of the city with shops owned and patronised by members of the Indian community.

Thirdly, from the point of view of what Cohen, et al (1989) call the dimension of psychosocial context, there may be interesting differences between these communities. It should be noted at the outset that the construction of personal space for these two communities differs markedly, with the Indian community characterised by close kinship networks as opposed to a more open or fluid social networking characteristic of the White community.

Furthermore, the Indian community, or significant parts of it, may find themselves in a situation of political and social insecurity, which may not apply to any significant part of the White community. Historically it is a community that has been squeezed between Black and

White (Carrim 1993; Chetty 1992). This kind of insecurity, painted in very rough strokes here, is to some extent demonstrated by the fact that almost half of the Indian respondents who identified themselves with the political policies of one or more of the African National Congress or the South African Communist Party also identified themselves as supporters of National Party policies.

If there is a grain of truth in this formulation, could it be that Indian respondents identify the mass media as the main source of information as a result of attempting to keep 'in the know' of national developments, and high reliability scores for the mass media do not necessarily reflect a belief in the content but in their own need to be informed?

On the other hand, the White community has benefited from decades of White minority rule and have a sense of security in their own future - perhaps even an arrogance which is no better illustrated than by the militancy of the White Right. This is a community that may not need the news, good or bad. This is probably overly cynical, and is belied by the fact that the group identifying contacts as a main source of information do tend to provide answers to some of the attitudinal questions which are in line with academic research findings.

The notion of cognitive engagement is useful here, and when translated by Zaller (1992: 43) into 'political awareness', could be a fruitful tool for exploring the contact/mass media differential that exists within the two communities studied. His argument is that people with a higher political awareness are more likely to receive political messages, which falls into line with the finding that White respondents of a Left/Liberal persuasion are more generally

sceptical of the mass media (preferring contacts for information), and of television in particular. If we also continue to explore the idea that the Indian community is insecure, we end up with a pool of respondents who are politically aware, but whose main sources of information are quite different and lead to different attitudes about when violence started, its degree of severity and the toll.

On the face of it, this research falls into line with research that has shown,

the greater ability of the more involved viewer to counter argue with news stories (which is) expected to produce a degree of immunity to framing effects (Iyengar 1991, 118).

This is a real possibility within a section of the White community and reinforces a Left/Liberal understanding of political violence as being a result of social forces rather than simply a victim/perpetrator narrative. However for the Indian community such a conclusion is not immediately apparent. The social structure of this community may predispose its members towards 'involvement', but this does not produce the counterargument that Iyengar identifies as its result.

This research also finds resonance with Susan Booyesen's (1991) work on the differential between mass media and social networks as sources of political information among English and Afrikaans speaking White university students. She has established that there does exist such a differential and that cultural categories can be successfully used in the study of political communication in South Africa.

## Conclusion

In the course of this research we have encountered evidence of significant differences in attitude towards the mass media, and to some extent media usage. It remains a distinct possibility that some of these differences are methodological. In an exploratory study of this kind the main objective is that of re-invigorating the empirical side of media studies with particular reference to the audience. There are excellent institutional analyses of media in South Africa (see Tomaselli, Tomaselli and Muller 1987, 1989) and some provocative and insightful textual analyses of broadcasting (see Posel 1990; Roome 1997; and Trager 1997). So far there have been very few integrated media studies and this research shows how complicated and difficult this integrated media research can be, particularly as the political wind moves against the continued use of racial discourse to identify groups. These results are certainly not a vindication of the Apartheid 'separate development' strategy, but do bear testimony to the successful imposition and maintenance of cultural categories. There is good reason to believe that as the spatial and socio-psychological barriers are broken down in the new South Africa, the consumption patterns, and impact, of the mass media will change.

A central aspect of this study is the issue of *personal contact*, as a primary source of information, and the difficulty of disentangling its significance viz a viz the media. This issue is one which has consistently emerged in the media effects tradition, without resolution, and is a central conceptual distinction in the uses and gratifications approach which argues that media use originates for problem resolution and meeting needs. McQuail (1994: 320) summarises the position thus:

Media use can thus be seen to be both limited and motivated by complex and interacting forces in society and in the personal biography of the individual. This is a

sobering thought for those who hope to explain as well as describe patterns of audience behaviour.

Moving now to the second case study of this chapter, we explore the significance of Disney products in the South African context. Without the long-standing exposure to Disney characteristic of many developed countries of the North, the comparison between population groups in South Africa potentially reveals aspects of the 'complex and interacting forces' that McQuail alludes to, above.



## Case Study 2:

### Disney in South Africa<sup>3</sup>

The transition to democracy in South Africa has understandably generated a lot of debate about the cultural contours of the new society, and foregrounded the role of cultural resource providers (particularly the media) in both the maintenance of Apartheid and the construction of what has come to be affectionately known as the 'Rainbow Nation'.

Considering the position of the United States in the years of cultural isolation, and its pre-eminence in any consideration of the implications of 'globalization', thinking about the Disney phenomenon and its impact on South Africans raises a number of questions. Is there global cultural penetration in South Africa? Are there discernible patterns of cultural appropriation across the diversity of groups in South Africa? And, is South Africa being 'Americanized' or 'Disneyized' (see Bryman 1999)?

The intellectual aspects of these debates have tended to be negative (see Netshitenzhe 1999) and are exemplified by Ted Leggett's caustic comment:

The most virulent of the media colonists are the Americans, the masters of the form. Eager for the 'sophistication' and 'success' that American culture represents, some South African youth are ready to embrace the marauding hordes (Leggett 1997: 98).

---

<sup>3</sup> This study was carried out as part of a global survey of Disney audiences, published as *Dazzled by Disney? The Global Disney Audiences Project*, edited by Janet Wasko, Mark Phillips and Eileen Meehan.

The reality on the streets of South Africa's urban centers is one of stylish hairdo's, sneakers, baseball caps and baggy jeans, worn to the accompaniment of 'kwaito' (indigenous hip hop) and Kentucky Fried Chicken. This process of Americanization, of the youth in particular, has its roots in television, and to a lesser extent in the cinema, and is beginning to kick back into sports (for example, the growing popularity of basketball). However, the Disney product range (as an identifiable source of cultural 'goodies') remains one which is largely perceived as a childhood phenomenon. Of course, the interesting exercise of tracing the predispositions constructed in childhood into young adulthood would require a much deeper analysis than is possible in this study. But this study at least begins to examine these issues by looking at the presence and reception of Disney products in South Africa.

### **Disney, the Entertainment Provider**

The Disney presence in South Africa would seem to be relatively slight, with no theme parks or Disney shops, no dedicated Disney Channel, and no high profile magazines, comics or educational products. Nevertheless, the students surveyed had a high level of awareness of many of these products. The Disney icons, Mickey and company, are in evidence, but one is more likely to encounter clothing, toys and collectibles associated with one or more of the recent films, such as *The Lion King*, or more recently, *Tarzan*. It is probably true to say that the current Disney presence is derived from these recent films and the accompanying merchandising sector of the Disney enterprise.

According to the company, Disney has had a presence in South Africa for over 25 years. Prior to 1997, products (excluding film and videos) were made available through a local company responsible for licensing to manufacturers. Normally, this would mean paying for

the rights to use a Disney character/s (Donald Duck, Mickey and Lion King derivatives being the most popular) with strict quality control (approval of artwork, privileging certain chain stores over others), for which a fee was paid and then a percentage of sales taken. One company official reported that in 1997, the annual revenues from Disney products (mostly toys and textiles) in South Africa was about 300 million rand (or \$66 million). (Disney sets South Africa subsidy, 1997)

Since 1997 a wholly-owned subsidiary, Disney Enterprises Southern Africa has been responsible for marketing Disney merchandise, not only in South Africa, but the rest of the continent. As company officials explain,

Southern Africa is one of the exciting new markets in the world. We are confident Disney Enterprises Southern Africa will help open up new avenues for Disney involvement in the region. South Africa will provide the platform for the group to move into the rest of Africa, where it has had very little exposure to date. The whole idea is to use South Africa as a base to go into the rest of Africa. We don't know Africa. We don't know what the potential is. We have a lot to learn, and we are here to do that (Pearson, 1997).

The aim of company officials is to “be on the lookout for unique cultural and marketing ideas that could be taken from South Africa into new markets,” however, “heavy capital investment” in South African partnerships was not expected.

A central platform for the promotion of Disney merchandise also has been created through a collaboration between the South African Broadcasting Corporation and the Consumer Products division within Disney in the form of sponsorship of the afternoon cartoon slots on TV1, the most popular channel amongst African viewers. This initiative is specifically aimed at 5-6 year olds, with a view to ‘acclimatising’ them to Disney. This mirrors a series

of collaborations between local companies and the various elements of the Disney corporate structure. For example, Nu Metro has the rights to video, Ster Kinekor has the rights for certain films, M-Net (a pay-TV station) has contracts with Buena Vista International to re-flight films from the Touchstone, Hollywood and Miramax stables, and so on.

Each of these entertainment arenas (film, video and merchandise) will act collaboratively when the occasion warrants it. For example, the recently released Tarzan movie saw a sophisticated marketing drive involving Ster Kinekor, Shell petrol garages and Disney enterprises. This is probably no different from other countries, and simply points to the interlocking and piggybacking which characterises the entertainment industries.

The movie industry in South Africa is dominated by two companies, Ster Kinekor (about 68% of market share) and Nu Metro, respectively. Speaking informally to the managing directors of these organisations reveals that the movie industry in South Africa is on a flat line at present with expansion only contemplated after 'deep' research, and then only into environs which offer a 'total entertainment experience' in shopping centres termed multiplexes. With the average age range of 16-23 years (and falling) constituting 75% of the movie-going populace; issues of peer pressure; 'out of home entertainment experiences'; disposable income; and largely intact Apartheid metro planning and transport, all feed into a stagnant cinematic milieu for the majority of South Africans. Ster Kinekor has made a brief foray into opening up the cinematic option for people living in what are still loosely called 'townships' or peripheral residential areas, mostly constructed or appropriated as a response to the old Group Areas legislation, which, although long gone, divides the country into

segments dominated by one or other race group. This adventure, through a wholly owned subsidiary, Moribo (a company set up as a Black economic empowerment project, which, like many other such initiatives, have targeted the media/entertainment sectors of the economy), sought in 1996/7 to broaden access for township residents, but without much success, notwithstanding the attempt to transform cinemas into community centres (for meetings, etc). Another failed attempt to draw Africans to the cinema was the disastrous effort to indigenise *The Lion King* by having it translated into the Zulu language, which resulted in the withdrawal of the prints and heavy losses.

The captains of these cultural resource providers contend that it is the emerging African middle class which is at the forefront of those wanting the 'out of home experience', and the current 10-15% of movie audiences at large multiplexes (largely situated in White areas) is made up of the trickle of African, Coloured and Indian residents of these gradually more integrated neighbourhoods, and visitors from further afield. While the video rental market continues to grow apace, it is not clear how this growth is spread, nor its contribution to a rounded sense of the Disney project, with all that this means for widespread identification with Disney products of all kinds, and the construction of a meaningful place for Disney in popular consciousness.

The All Media Products Survey (1999) highlights the difference between Black and White (the division is theirs, not the author's) in terms of cinema attendance: a meagre 10.2% of the former having watched a film in the last year compared with 58.7% of the latter group, and only 1.2% of the Black age group 16-24 years went to the movies in the last seven days,

compared with 24.8% of Whites. It is common cause that radio is a far more accessed medium than is television for Africans in general, although claims of a 77% daily viewership amongst the growing African middle class have been made (Independent Newspapers 1999), a figure that is close to that for the White group as a whole. This emerging African middle class, or 'patriotic bourgeoisie', as it sometimes referred to, is extremely small, and we currently find ourselves embroiled in a debate about the role of this new social force.

Thus, we find that even though Disney's presence in the South Africa may be far less than in many other countries, there are enough Disney products for the brand to be recognized.

### **Studying the Disney Audience in South Africa**

During the latter half of 1997, 30 questionnaires were administered to students at each of the University's of Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus), Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) and the University of Cape Town, totalling 90 in all. These universities were chosen in order to generate a reasonable spread of opinions, with the University of Natal servicing a large Indian community, the University of Cape Town servicing a large Coloured community, and Rand Afrikaans University servicing the large Afrikaans speaking White community. All three have significant numbers of African students.

Due to the difficulties of establishing category proportions at these universities and limited time available to fieldworkers, it was decided to use a form of convenience sampling, which resulted in sub-populations of Africans (26%), Indians (9%), Coloureds (10%) and Whites

(56%)<sup>4</sup>. These group proportions do not mirror the demographics at South African universities (as a whole), where Black students do outnumber White students. Furthermore, none of the universities visited fall into the category of ethnic (read 'race') based campuses created in the Apartheid era (except perhaps for RAU), with both the Universities of Cape Town and Natal holding long pedigrees in the struggle to open tertiary education to all. Slightly more males (54%) than females (46%) were interviewed, which does reflect the student gender breakdown fairly accurately. Students were all interviewed outside the main library on each campus. In addition, a short pilot was undertaken to test for language, and it was decided to explain some terms (for example, thriftiness).

It is worth remembering that the students interviewed are unlikely to have been part of the death throws of Apartheid, and that many Black students may already have tasted some form of integration through the 'Model C' schooling system (previously all-white primary and secondary schools whose de-racialisation in the early 1990s created a platform for the de-racialisation of the education system as a whole).

While an effort to gather more qualitative data was made, in the form of nine in-depth interviews, none of these interviews shed significant light on the meaningfulness of Disney

---

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this study, determined to some extent by the research methodology informing the global study, 'groups' in South Africa refer to ethnic groups, although ethnicity has for decades been little more than racial classifications established in the legislative program of Apartheid. In political terms, this has meant a division between 'Black' and 'White' while culturally (and spatially and economically) there are four major groups viz African, Coloured and Indian ('Black') and people of European descent ('Whites'). With capitalism having taken a racial form in South Africa, and a central platform for the democratisation of South African society being its 'de-racialisation', it is not a racist approach to engage the issue of cultural transformation from the perspective of these fraught categories.

in a South African context, reproducing to a large extent the kinds of categories already established in the research framework.

## **Different Disney Experiences**

Unsurprisingly, it is Black South Africans who come to experience Disney much later than other groups in South Africa, with a reported average age of 10.3 years at first contact, as compared with 4.6 years for White, 4.25 for Coloured and 3.2 for Indian students.

Furthermore, the proportion of African students who indicate 'little contact' with Disney remains relatively stable through childhood, teen years and adulthood (just over 60%).

White students on the other hand, display a much more intuitively normal process of diminishing contact with Disney as they get older (from 50% who cite lots of contact in childhood through to 18% in adulthood). In the case of Indians and Coloureds, the small sample sizes militate against any firm conclusions, but there does seem to be a tendency for both groups to have early contact which tails off, as they grow older.

In terms of liking/disliking Disney, it seemed appropriate to draw conclusions on the basis of dividing the original seven point scale into one with two poles, liking and disliking (dispensing with the important nuances because of the small number of questionnaires).

African students, while not displaying the same degree of 'liking', sustain this liking for much longer. Starting with 61% in childhood through 61% in teen years, it falls to 54% in adulthood. Indian students are not far behind this pattern, starting off at 75%, sustaining this through the teen years, and falling to 50% in adulthood. Coloured students demonstrate a much sharper decline, with 78% liking Disney in childhood, 67% in teen's years, falling to



33% in adulthood. White students show the sharpest decline between childhood (72%) and teen years (54%), levelling off to 44% in adulthood.

From a gender perspective, it is clear that women have the most contact with Disney, and they remain ahead of men even as contact diminishes with age. A similar configuration can be found when looking at student's reports of how much (and when) they like Disney.

Women (as children, teens and adults) consistently find Disney more likeable (78% in childhood, 68% in their teens and 54% in adulthood) than men, who are about 15% behind at each stage.

The most accessed Disney products are Disney films (98%), across all race groups, closely followed by video rental, books and comics (78%), and TV Shows (70%). For African students, access to film (91%) is followed by comic books (74%), books (65%), TV Shows and magazines (56%), and video rental (44%). White students on the other hand have all accessed films, and high proportions have accessed video rental (86%), books (80%), comics (76%) and TV Shows (74%). There are significant differences between groups in terms of some of the other Disney products available. For example, Indian students find the educational products, magazines and video games more appealing than any other group. Least popular is the Disney home page, with only 12% of students having visited it (although two-thirds of the visits have been made by male students). In terms of merchandise, Indian students own the most Disney products, with toys (88%), Mickey watches (50%) and other collectibles (63%) being the most popular. African students are the least likely to own such products, no jewellery and only half having owned a Disney toy. A

significant proportion of all groups have owned Disney clothing (all groups above 60%). All Disney merchandise is more popular with women than with men, clothing being the most popular merchandise for both sexes. As one White female student responded when asked about what Disney means: “Cartoon characters, fantasy, fun. Everyone has heard of it. Everyone has a Disney product!”

Coloured and White students are strongly in agreement with the idea that Disney is uniquely American (78% and 72% respectively), whereas only 35% of Africans and 38% of Indians agree. There were a large number of non-responses to this question, which is also significant: 30% of Africans, 25% of Indians, 11% of Coloureds and 8% of Whites left the question unanswered. Interestingly, a significantly higher proportion of women agree that Disney is American (71%) as opposed to 51% of men. A high number of non-responses were again encountered in this question (22% of women, 10% of men).

Adjectives, which 75% of all race groups believe are promoted by Disney, are: family, fantasy, fun, good over evil, happiness and love/romance. There are no significant differences in the degree to which these groups subscribe to these adjectives, except in the case of love/romance where African students (78%) are about ten percentage points behind their colleagues in other groups.

In the other adjectival categories where there is no overwhelming unanimity, such as bravery, imagination, magic and optimism, the tendency is for Indian and White students to score Disney high on promoting these attributes, while African students (and to a lesser

extent, Coloured students) are 10-15% more conservative in their willingness to identify Disney as promoting them.

The adjectives (statements) which are most uneven in terms of student's willingness to identify them with Disney are: physical beauty (where all groups were in two thirds agreement, except Coloureds, of whom only half were prepared to acknowledge Disney's role in promoting this attribute); respect for difference (where less than half of African students, nearly 90% of Coloured students, and just over 60% of White and Indian students felt that Disney promoted this value); technological progress (where Whites were equally divided on promoting and discouraging, Coloureds and Indians nearly two thirds in favour of Disney promoting, and African students overwhelmingly in support of Disney promoting this idea); work ethic (where less than half of African and White students, and nearly two thirds of Indian and Coloured students believed this value was promoted by Disney).

While there were no adjectives that all groups identified as being discouraged by Disney (except for racism, see comment below), there are those that are viewed in markedly different ways. The value of individualism, for example, which Indians (75%), and Coloureds (67%) and Whites (54%) believe is promoted by Disney, is seen as being discouraged by the majority of Africans who responded to the question. This would seem to resonate with Thomas Oosthuizen's comment, that, "our own research reveals the importance of society for blacks (sic) as far exceeding that of the individual" (1995: 46).<sup>5</sup> It

---

<sup>5</sup> See the interesting debates around whether or not Africans have a different 'world view', encapsulated for example, in the term *ubuntu*, in Makgoba (1999).

is noteworthy that there were a high number of 'not applicable' responses to this question, but it is not clear why so many people did not answer this question.

Patriarchy, too, is seen as being promoted by just over half of the Indian and White students, whereas over 30% of all students see this as a descriptive which is not applicable to Disney. Patriotism, too, is not unequivocally a value recognised in Disney products, with nearly 40% of students feeling that it is a value that is not applicable. Racism is generally seen as being discouraged by Disney, but the scores for this descriptive are almost outweighed by those which see it as not applicable.

Viewing these adjectives through the gender prism reveals that more women students see Disney promoting bravery, family, fantasy, fun, good over evil, happiness, imagination, love/romance and magic than do their male counterparts (although the rates for both sexes are high). More men students feel that Disney promotes optimism, individualism, respect for difference and technological progress, although the scores in all of these except optimism are much lower generally than for the descriptives above. While both sexes agree that Disney promotes physical beauty and discourages racism, the response rates are interesting: in the former, more women (71%) than men (61%) support this characterisation of Disney, and in the latter, the response rates for discouraging racism and finding the descriptive not applicable are virtually the same. The adjectives of patriotism and patriarchy are scored more highly by women, although in both cases there is not a clear majority of students who support the idea that Disney promotes them. Finally, while half the women students believe

that the idea of a work ethic is not applicable to Disney, a good majority of men believe the notion to be promoted by Disney.

### **The Divided Responses**

So, what can be said about these responses to the questionnaire? It seems as though the divisions between White and African people are reproduced in their contact with, and interpretations of, Disney artefacts (film and video, in particular). When we consider the enormous disparities between these groups in terms of access to infrastructure, education levels, income and employment, it comes as no surprise that levels of contact differ markedly, the likelihood of owning Disney merchandise differ markedly, and the consequences in terms of characterisations also differ. The stark reality of nearly half of all African households being without electricity (Hirschowitz and Orkin 1997: 125) impacts directly on TV watching (and video rental); the fact that average monthly earnings of Africans (for those that are employees) is just 32% of that for Whites (Schlemmer and Moller 1997: 28) impacts directly on the disposable cash available for the expensive outings to cinemas (which, while close to most campuses surveyed, are not close to townships). However, when we consider that the students spoken to are an elite, particularly the African group, we are drawn towards the conclusion that Disney does have a presence in an increasingly significant layer of African society.

However, there are responses that raise questions about the reference points for different groups in terms of certain crucial characterizations of Disney. The fact that there is a high non-response rate to the matter of Disney being uniquely American points to the ubiquity of

American programs on television (our staple diet during the cultural boycott), and perhaps to a relatively unsophisticated audience. Guy Berger has made the revealing comment, that,

while figures exist on the sizes of (some) audiences, very little research has been done on how they decode, negotiate, and make use of the contents of media (1999: 111)

As for those who did respond to this question, there were some interesting contradictory statements. As noted above, many White students felt that Disney was uniquely American, and some ascribed more specific characteristics. For instance,

Disney is wholly American cultural phenomenon which seems to perpetuate the false consciousness of economic liberalism, gender-stereotypes, patriarchy and the land of the brave and the free as a model for the rest of the planet to aspire to!

Yes, it's very American. All the characters with other accents (e.g. British; e.g. Jeremy Irons as Scar) are EVIL. RACIST BASTARDS.

However, several White students were more conflicted, as indicated in these responses:

Yes, Disney is American to me and is unique to U.S.A. No, all Western cultures strive to educate and make their kids be optimistic and ambitious.

Yes, it is an ideology; the perception of a perfect world, a type of euphoria. It creates a fantasy yet tends to avoid the underlying issues of humanity and reality. Overall it is an excellent tool of escape for young children. Therefore I believe that it does not represent or reflect an entirely American culture, but is definitely heavily influenced by the American culture.

Two Coloured students responded similarly:

No and Yes. It shows you American culture. But it shows you another world. It promotes dreams.

No. It is a part of growing up that cannot be spoilt. It shows that with differences we can always go back to something we all can relate to.

The theme of 'differences' was also picked up by a few of the Black students, who generally were less sure that Disney represented American culture, as noted above. Two Black, Zulu speaking, students provided the following commentaries:

Disney is universal because it promotes the cultures across nations.  
Black/White enjoy Disney products.

Yes, [Disney is American], as Africans what appears [in] some videos is not applicable to us. So, as a result we tend to imitate what is done and think is the best 'cause it appears in movies

An Indian student echoed these sentiments:

No, [Disney is not uniquely American] as it is universal in terms of morals, values, etc.; it is a part of every culture, to be enjoyed by everyone.

On matters of Disney promoting individualism and technological progress, where there are significant differences across groups, it is only too easy to fall into cultural stereotypes, and further research would need to unpack the various milieu, particularly the domestic viewing milieu, in order to develop a coherent understanding of these differences.

### **Conclusions: Towards a Common Culture?**

Disney products in South Africa still occupy a relatively small part of the field of cultural resources available to her people, a field that it must be recognized is changing fast, both from the perspective of who has access (and how appropriation takes place relative to other resources) and from the perspective of the range and diversity of these resources. While "there are no essential links between what matters to people and the 'cultural' groups people belong to" (Van Staden, 1997: 48), the legacy of Apartheid imposes the reality of a racially divided society like a grid over the field of cultural consumption. This grid may be wearing

thin at the more affluent levels of the society, but this blurring of divisions will not necessarily result in a common set of values as new matrices of the popular take hold (for example, the notion of an African Renaissance which is already a significant popular discourse). Oosthuizen's remark that "not only is there a substantial convergence of values between black and white youth" (1995: 48) ignores the very real questions posed by the turbulent and unpredictable process of de-racialisation of the society.

Nevertheless, Disney is not a sideshow for the rich and mobile only. As television viewing expands (which it is), in contexts where collective viewing gradually gives way to more individualised viewing (as is happening in township contexts), there is a strong probability that 'children's Disney' will increase in popularity. This means a more general identification with animated characters as Disney characters, and a revised sense of the forms of storytelling (rather than novelty value) available in the society. The lack of rootedness of the original characters (like Mickey and Donald) in South Africa does require that we consider less the nostalgic aspects of Disney (which seem to be a feature of longer exposure), and more the question of Disney as an interface between young people coming from markedly different backgrounds.

## **Concluding remarks**

These two case studies bring us face to face with the endless dilemma of media/communication studies. First, in our endeavours to measure media influence and penetration, the methodological approach will often set a parameter for what can be



understood. As the authors (Dickinson et al., 1998: xi) of a recent collection on audience research approaches suggest,

All research which takes media processes as central to its analysis stems from an interest or concern with the consequences of the media for society, communities, publics, readers, listeners, viewers, consumers – audiences. The difference between approaches is, essentially, to do with the scale of analysis or the length of focus – micro or macro – chosen by the researcher in question.

The simple comparisons across groups in both cases potentially mask the practices of individuals whose characteristics are already identified as a way of constructing reality. This is legitimised by the very fact of Apartheid, which constructed South Africa in these terms, but which never succeeded in destroying the possibility of action outside of the prescribed framework.

Secondly, all the debates around media/communications as a central (if contested) pillar of ‘the public sphere’ are subjected to the process of constructing the actor (whether it is as individual, group, community or nation) in an effort to measure the efficacy of said public sphere. John Thompson’s (1994) ‘new publicness’, based on the private consumption of media (a significant advance on Habermas’ original ideas on the public sphere) remains trapped in such a measurement exercise, ultimately judged by society itself, and often through the media. We will have to tread the unruly and chaotic path so eloquently spelled out by Ien Ang if we wish to move beyond this problem.

Thirdly there are serious implications for targeted messaging, in these studies. With the resurgence of interest in media as a source of representations designed to modify behaviour, as in the *loveLife* and *Soul City* campaigns currently the subject of much debate, the question

of culture comes to centre stage (see Chapter 2). It becomes the task of campaign designers to think themselves into the minds of the target audience. We have seen above, such thinking requires systematic surveillance of the ways in which different strata (however defined) interface with the mass media.

Finally, while these studies are by no means representative of the interface between audiences and the mass media, two significant issues arise:

First, the question of media influence on culture. Media is itself culture (a meaningful representation) and inserts itself in many different ways into the everyday lives of consumers/receivers. As indicated above, there are many different ways in which this relation can be understood. Moreover, the *significance* of the mass media, at any point, says much about how people understand the role of media (as a resource alongside other experiential dimensions of social life). This is more than simply a matter of how much media is consumed or received: as the Disney case would seem to suggest, content is crucially significant in its association with other cultural resources. Pre-empting our discussion below, it is worth noting that *loveLife*, a well resourced (20 million dollars a year), multi-media campaign around HIV/AIDS, is founded on

The recognition that a major influence on post-liberation South African youth is the global youth culture of music, fashion, pop icons and commercial brands led to the positioning of *loveLife* – an inspirational lifestyle brand for young South Africans (Harrison and Steinberg 2002: 3/4).

The powerful role of the mass media, particularly television, is critical to this assumption.

Secondly, as will become clearer below, mass media is a central part of the discussion about communication in/for development, if only at a very general level (as an influence on

attitudes for example). A critical approach to this general role of media in society suggests that the global context of deregulated, highly concentrated, market-driven media increasingly feeds predispositions towards consumption, and contributes less and less towards a critical appraisal of forms of social life/social arrangements (Herman and McChesney 1997). In this regard, Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli (2001: 143) argue that,

South African media seems to have followed the international trend of creating a stronger commercial ethos, conceptualising their audiences as consumers and voters rather than primarily as citizens.

Concretely establishing the modalities of the relations between media (in all its forms, but particularly the commercial media), and society, continues to provide a monumental challenge for social scientists and communication specialists, and should not detain us for too long as we turn to communication and development.

## Chapter 2

In the previous chapter we have identified how the sociological construct of the 'group' manifests itself as a reality, in its relation to the mass media. Characteristics of such constructs, as measured by simple designs, indicate some predispositions to action (or behaviour) and lend credibility to the sociology of the media as a field of institutional and organizational intervention. This is not a profound conclusion. However, there is no unanimity on exactly how the interface between mass media and society actually works. (See McQuail 1994). The field remains open. NB!

Turning now to 'development communication', it is necessary to outline briefly the way it has emerged, and identify some of its central characteristics, in order to better assess the discursive environment within which development practitioners, policy-makers and academics construct the central elements of 'communication for development'. There will be, inevitably, concerns within each of the many approaches to development communication that resonate with issues discussed in the previous chapter. It is in response to questions emerging about the mechanics of media/communication interventions that brings into relief the notion of interface, an absent 'determinant' in the scrutiny of aggregated media

measurement. The interface 'between' agents (of whatever kind – individual, collective, rule based or voluntarist) is the most accessible point of entry, and provides the platform for the 'media effects' tradition.

## Communication and Development

The literature on development communication is unanimous in its identification of Daniel Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958) and Wilbur Schramm's *Mass Media and National Development* (1964) as the first systematic linking of communication and development in such a way as to establish a model for communication planning in developing or Third World countries (Melkote 1991; Melkote and Steeves 2001; Jacobson and Servaes 1999). Lerner was particularly interested in the psycho-social foundations of traditional societies, and the power of the mass media to inject empathy into such contexts, giving "individuals the capacity to see themselves in the other fellow's situation" (1958: 50). This trait, empathy, was seen as an essential skill for traditional people moving out of traditional settings, and led to mobility (or a capacity for change) which would result in urbanisation, increased literacy, and fuller economic and political participation. *ne!*

These theorists, drawing on the social theory of Parsons, Lasswell, Lewin and Merton adopted 'modernisation' as the central theoretical and practical tool necessary to transform economically weak and culturally 'backward' societies into clones of Western capitalist societies.

The modernisation thesis combined a cultural model of change (i.e. through transformation of attitudes) with an evolutionary blueprint of how these changes unfold.<sup>6</sup> 'Development' for modernisation adherents, consisted of quantifiable economic growth through industrialisation and urbanisation, use of capital-intensive technology and central planning.

---

<sup>6</sup> W. W. Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth* (1960) being the best-known stages theory, posited that all societies pass through a single unique sequence of stages (Roxborough 1979:16).

In addition they asserted that the causes of 'backwardness' lay mainly within the culture of these societies (Goonasakera 1987).

The macro and the micro levels were cemented by the work of McClelland and Hagen in the early 1960s, who argued (with different emphases) that socialisation and education in 'backward' societies contributed to a personality which was traditional – self-centred, lacking esteem and authoritarian (see Melkote 1991). In an effort to transform the perceived cultural deficiency which characterised the mass of peasants, mass media was identified as a causal factor in changing personalities and inducing achievement motivation traits - and thereby changing the traditional way of life of the poor. Unfortunately, traditional forms of communication, such as interpersonal networks and folk culture (music, dance etc) were identified as supports, sustaining traditional structures and authority, and therefore constituted a barrier to change.

→ TRADITIONAL VS MODERNISATION (COMMUNICATIONS)  
→ DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION IN RURAL (TRADITIONAL)

Consequently, it was the Western mass media models which came to be imposed in these nations. A UNESCO 'media minima' was established in 1960 which recommended that every nation should aim to provide, for every 100 of inhabitants: 10 copies of daily newspapers; 5 radio receivers; 2 television receivers; 2 cinema seats (Feliciano 1976: 92). However, by the mid 1970s, the largely quantitative hardware head counting did not show, unambiguously that the growth of radio receivers, newspaper copies etc in Africa, Asia and Latin America was matched by economic growth (see Schramm 1976).

The reliance of development communication on:

- a hypodermic model of mass media effects (when such a model was largely discredited in academic circles) (see Zaller 1992: 310), and,
- data which was purely quantitative and rooted in dubious U.S. state department intelligence collecting initiatives (see Samarajiwa 1987);
- a growing recognition amongst neo-Weberians and Marxists that modernisation was only one of many readings of historical change (see Roxborough 1979), and,
- a growing emphasis on global interrelationships (dependency theory and world systems theory) as an alternative to the stages theory,

meant that by the mid-1970s, this dominant paradigm as it had come to be called, was no longer a sustainable force in intellectual terms, but one which had laid the groundwork for mass media planning in societies which fell within the U.S. orbit. By the late 1970s, the growing Third World/ Non-Aligned lobby in the United Nations was able to get the New International Economic Order (NIEO) proposals adopted, and UNESCO carried this thrust into the sphere of communication with the formulation of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) leading to the well known MacBride Report *Many Voices, One World*.

These developments consolidated what is now called the dependency thesis - stressing as it did the interrelatedness of economic (including technological) structural relations and ideological/cultural relations between advanced industrial/capitalist societies and those of Africa, Asia and Latin America,

which implies that any analysis of the media in any single country would be empirically and theoretically barren unless it takes into account both the historical fact of colonialism and the international context of dependence (Golding 1977: 91).

A number of researchers working outside of the United States began to use the dependency model to mount a critique of the dominant paradigm. Diaz-Bordenave (1976: 46), drawing on the work of Paulo Freire, argued that the dominant paradigm subscribed to models of communication that were one-way, top-down and linear; what Freire called a 'transmission mentality' which viewed audiences as passive receivers and which established marked differences in status and in role between giver and receiver. In addition to supporting the critique of imported models, Beltran (1976: 18) contested the underlying assumptions of the dominant paradigm, namely that a country by itself can generate development, regardless of economic and political conditions, and went on to cite numerous examples to show how unequal access to resources favoured certain groups with regard to the use of communication channels for access to instrumental information and the adoption of new ideas. Everett Rogers summarised this emerging critique thus:

Communication researchers also began to question some of their prior assumptions, becoming especially critical of earlier inattention to 1) the content of the mass media 2) the need for social structural change in addition to communication, if development were to occur 3) the shortcomings of the classical diffusion of innovations viewpoint which had become an important explanation of micro-level development (1976a: 135).

The dependency thesis, and related frameworks which stressed relationships between nations, provided the impetus for a multi-faceted critique of cultural and/or media imperialism as well as a critique of the technology transfer thesis, which had held pride of place in the 'GNP barometer' perspective in development thinking. However, the



dependency thesis did not solve the development crisis of the Third World, and in the 1980s an explosion of new approaches to development (and communication) took place: the basic needs approach; self-reliant development; sustainable development and *Another* development, for example, all entered the development discourse and broadened it to include more qualitative indices of development, such as the Physical Quality of Life Index, Human Rights, Participation and Democracy (see Jayaweera 1987). These reconceptualisations decisively shifted the institutional focus of development planning and practice away from the state, towards Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and problematised the role of the state and the market in development practices.

Communication featured prominently in this process, with firstly the adoption of a “two-step <sup>net</sup> flow of communication” theory (Melkote and Steeves 2001) which recognised the segmentation of media susceptibility (between elites and ‘the rest’) and secondly, a ‘small is beautiful’ mentality, building on the recommendations of the MacBride Report published in 1980. This report stressed greater access to media by minorities (women and youth in particular) and encouraged the use of folk media, interpersonal communication, and small technology media (see Sussman and Lent 1990; Golding 1991). In addition, communication was increasingly viewed as an organisational tool for building self-reliance and participation, which meant increasing cooperation between media planners, producers, grass-roots organisations and technology support. The initial Satellite Instruction Television Experiment, conducted in the early 1970s, provided a major boost to viewing communications interventions in this way (Singhal and Rogers 1989).

TYPE

This approach to media/communications is loosely called participatory communication, but may also usefully be called development support communication to distinguish it from the view of communications as a causal variable for development (as in the dominant paradigm). There are now numerous examples of development support communication: the use of radio in Latin America and in Africa, video in India and Brazil, and more contentiously, satellite in the Philippines and India (see Mowlana and Wilson 1990).

Furthermore the widely recognised mediated nature of media effects has now placed participatory message design firmly at the centre of participatory communication, although the question of who sets the agenda for these participatory exercises remains problematic (Mody 1991: 30).

The participatory approach to communications for development has been growing in a number of different directions for the last two decades, and has broadened the theoretical basis of the field substantially (see Servaes 1996). However, Thomas Jacobsen has remarked that John Lent's assessment that "confusion marks the status of development and communication projects and studies in the 1980s" (Lent 1987 in Jacobsen 1996: 269) is true for the 1990s as well. This is partly a result of the methodological changes wrought by a participatory approach (its turn away from positivist and empiricist research strategies towards qualitative and interpretative strategies); definitional and conceptual 'fuzziness'; a resurgence of interest in an active audience approach to reception studies; the re-affirmation of the necessity to consider culture and social organization as fundamental elements in the

development process and so on (Huesca 2002). This has meant of course that it is much more difficult to establish firm models that can be transported across different contexts

This sketch of the way in which communications and development have been related, has highlighted a number of crucial questions:

- the nature of the institutional and organisational role played by state, civil organisation, and experts in media/communications for/in development; - LANGUAGE / CULTURE
- the purpose of communication strategies and the way they are implemented (targeting or participatory): from changing attitudes amongst individuals to capacity building amongst sectors of the disadvantaged (e.g. ethnic minorities, women etc); - BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE
- the shifting theoretical sands of media effects (and by implication, emphases within social theory) from a hypodermic model operating on the minds of cultural 'dopes', to an actor-centred empowerment project recognising the mediated nature of message interpretation (usually, within a specific cultural context). CULTURE INTERPRETATION

MS!  
done

As the editors to the influential collection *Theoretical Approaches to Participatory Communication* (Jacobson and Servaes, 1999) argue, the turn to a more dialogical framework has been but one in a series of re-evaluations of the development (read Modernization) project, including shifts in the epistemological and ontological assumptions underlying research (and the role of experts in particular) as well as geopolitical shifts since the 1980s (1999: 3).

These questions are by no means resolved. Ithiel Pool, for example, supported a notion of development communication which is very close to the original formulations of the dominant paradigm and which remain popular today, arguing that

the press, movies, and especially radio, operate in many ways to foster development. They convey knowledge of new ways of doing things. They raise aspirations. They create identification on a national and even international scale. They help create a wider market for goods and a less provincial political arena (1990: 170).

This he calls the 'infrastructure approach', distinguishing it from development communication which is a 'normative thesis' whereby mass communications are used by governments to spread "special perceptions of the truth" (Ibid: 180-186). Indeed Nain (2001) provides a detailed review of communication policies in India, Thailand and Taiwan which reveal strong dominant paradigm characteristics.

We could continue to document the nuances and shifts which bedevil the arena of development and communication, but that is not the main concern here. An over-reliance on imported perspectives serves only to deflect us from constructing a clearer picture of the practices of communication for development locally. Let us now move to case studies which highlight some of the questions asked (above) and provide a platform for a stronger analysis of the participatory dimension of communication for development.

- attempted

- POLITICS  
- OWNERSHIP OF MEDIA  
- AUTHORITY  
- PARTICIPATION

### *Case Study 3:*

## **Community Videomaking**

Tomaselli and Louw (1989) have provided a comprehensive analysis of the 'alternative press and its role in contributing to a counter hegemony during the dark days of massive repression as Apartheid began to crumble. Central to their analysis is the recognition of the significance of participation, primarily of professional media workers in, and for, oppressed communities, and the subsequent democratisation of information work and organisational empowerment. While their concerns are with the press, a similar process took place in the (then new) field of videomaking.

This author's experience in the Cape Town based Community Video Resource Association (1980-1), was that there were many participatory videos produced: simple, basic videos of conditions, and successful campaigns in places like Elsies River and Lavender Hill. There was never any doubt about who retained professional control of video production (camera work, editing etc) because the videos were made-to-order for organisational purposes. Professionals who were already working for news services (such as UPI, and Visnews), with their demonstrable political commitment to relevant material (such as strikes and boycotts) were given a great deal of freedom to make oppositional and participatory documentaries. Participation, in this context, refers to the easy access to, and willing cooperation of, members (or representatives) of an established community or organisation. Much of the same kind of thing was taking place elsewhere around the country. The point is that participatory or community video, for many video makers, had its roots, not in a use of

video for general educative purposes, what Deacon (1993) calls critical theory, but in political support communication. Central to this process was the continuous effort to capture 'reality' - political repression and brutality - as well as the strength of solidarity and organisation. It was, in many ways, alternative propaganda. The gradual shift towards the production of videos on relevant issues, which did not have (a) a strong organisational moment and (b) were not highly politicised, created problems for many video makers. In addition, the pace at which the medium became more technologically sophisticated deepened the professionalisation of those producing community video, and the lack of training and skill sharing meant that it was largely white activists, academics and media workers who were beneficiaries.

When we consider the many videos produced and circulated clandestinely during the 1980s, it is surprising that the first systematic treatment of community or participatory videomaking only appeared late in the decade (Tomaselli 1989; Lazarus and Tomaselli 1989). The litany of problems identified by Tomaselli (1989) remain the central ones today, against which most community or participatory video production must be measured. The difficulties are now more pressing than ever, with the political pot off the boil (although new genres of video use are emerging viz in mediation and violence documentation) and a growing sense of urgency about using video for education. Tomaselli (1989) identifies a number of crucial questions which characterise community or participatory video:

- what is 'community' and how is it established (by intervention or self-generated);
- what are the organisational features of this community (structures, decision making etc);

- what is 'participation' and what are the social characteristics of those conjoined in the production effort; who participates on each side;
- what relations are established vis-à-vis the technology and its use;
- questions of form, and the way in which codes of filmic practices reflect ideological representations of reality.

Within and between these categories are cross cutting matrices of power relations, goal variables and organisational dynamics as well as resource parameters and time frames.

Grounding the theory of community videomaking in its current (or historical) practices,

Tomaselli concludes that

production is not necessarily the prime purpose of community video. It facilitates a process of community organisation, of conscientisation of both producers (if external to the community) and the participatory community itself (1989: 14).

This process, he suggests, can be

diluted in the doing, because of apprehensions about safety of equipment in unskilled hands, naive assumptions about the subject-community's internal dynamics and relation to class issues, and uncritical acceptance of form (1989: 14).

This stress on organisational facilitation (or strengthening, as the case may be) and a concomitant conscientisation, is a crucial relationship which cannot be theorised in abstraction and arguably constitutes the key features, not only of community video, but of many other forms of intervention by agencies of various kinds.

The theme of conscientisation runs deep in the literature on community videomaking (see Quinlan 1992/3; Criticos and Quinlan 1991a; Criticos and Quinlan 1991b) in which the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire is invoked as the root theory for practices and goals of the video production. Freire's work played an important role in shifting the terms on which development communication was theorised in the 1970s, signalling the return of an agency perspective to a field dominated by a cultural theory of change (see Richards et al., 2001).

What is not clear however, is the linkage between conscientisation and organisation.

Providing the grounds for self-reflection and action (Criticos and Quinlan 1991a: 50) and the building of "a strong link between personal and social liberation" (Ibid: 50) does not address the problem of collective action, the context within which organisational development does or does not occur, and the process of negotiating the (potential) range of interests which exist in the community. Throughout Criticos' and Quinlan's work, reference is made to organisational matters, and these are described in some detail. The legitimacy of constructing a community-based organisation is not really a problem, so long as it is part of a broader organisational trajectory that a community (or class, group, network etc) has itself already embarked upon. The most serious difficulties, at an organisational level at least, for community videomakers, is when a community-based organisational initiative is implanted with goals which have been constructed independently of such a community. As Roger Deacon has correctly pointed out "the fishing community [the subject of Criticos' video] began to influence the project only once it was initiated and was effectively underway" (1993: 3) while Criticos and Quinlan (1991a: 50) recognise as a central difficulty

the way in which the projects create 'community' [which] immediately draws into contention the initial agendas of the participants.



Furthermore, in the light of their openly stated debt to participatory research, Criticos and Quinlan (1991a: 50) find themselves facing questions which the field of development research has faced for years viz: the cult of the expert and the problem of local knowledge; the tendency for research to be guided by professional interests; and the lack of an ongoing relationship between research and appropriate forms of involvement in development processes. As David Booth (1993: 65) suggests, citing Michael Edwards' pathbreaking analysis of NGOs in the South, the central problem in "looking at the relationship between research and development is [about] the absence of strong links between understanding and action".

In fact, co-generated or producer-driven videomaking solves at least one problem faced by development practitioners, in that one major goal is established. Deacon however sees this as interference, arguing that "the presumption that the project has a course to run implies the interference of initiating and constituting the project as 'project'" (1993: 5). There are difficulties with this suggestion, as there are with the suggestion that community video founders on its assumption of "human beings 'as subjects' or actors, [are] the self-conscious creators of society and history" (Ibid: 5). Deacon's invocation of Foucault's 'knowledge-power' relations as determinants of forms and possible domains of knowledge must be contrasted with a more realistic perspective. It may be, as Long and Villareal (1993: 157) have argued, that

knowledge encounters involve the struggle between agents whereby certain of them attempt to enrol others in their 'projects', getting them to accept particular frames of meaning and winning them over to their points of view. If they succeed then other parties 'delegate' power to them. These struggles focus around the 'fixing' of key points that have a controlling influence over the exchanges and attributions of meaning.

One of the problems with the Criticos-Quinlan efforts to undertake community video making is that the effects of these ‘power-knowledge’ struggles (which may not appear at all) are not clear. There are, of course, interpretations of organisational outcomes (particularly in the case of Criticos’ fishing community video) but little explanation of why/how they came about. How participatory can such projects then be? It is quite legitimate for community videomaking to go beyond Tomaselli’s definition of a “community talking to itself” (1989: 13), inasmuch as new skills and ways of seeing and interpreting the world are introduced from outside (a necessary procedure within both a context of inequality and a commitment to moral/political emancipatory action). However, without a procedure for sustaining, not simply the conscientisation of a constituted community (around a project), but its capacity to effectively incorporate a coherent package of practices with which to bridge the knowledge-action divide, community video (and its self-reflection) will remain little more than a series of experiments (with successes and failures) from which little theoretically can be deduced.

The self-reflection of Criticos-Quinlan amounts to a useful ethnography of community videomaking, which is contentious at a macro-level (see Deacon 1993), illuminating at a micro-level, but largely empty at what development researchers call the meso-level (or intermediate analytic level) (Booth 1993: 54). This level is concerned with providing the intellectual tools for understanding local collectivities (e.g. community, gender, group etc). As it stands, the Freirean framework tends to conceptualise knowledge as ‘understanding’, with ‘action’ tacked on, without a clear exposition of relationships at this meso-level. In this, Freirean adherents may reflect a preoccupation with individuals and their personal

liberation. This is precisely the problem faced by adherents of the dominant paradigm - they failed to understand that the individual is part of a network of interactions, not just ideas.

In an effort to explore intervention processes, Norman Long and others, in the field of development have begun to explore the link between communication and interaction.

Quoting Habermas' suggestion that "communicative actions are not only processes of interpretation, but are at the same time processes of integration and socialisation", Long (1993: 146) goes on to suggest that an interface analysis

which aims to elucidate the types of social discontinuities characteristic of situations where actors are involved in devising ways of bridging, accommodating to, or struggling against each other's different social and cognitive worlds

also requires an elucidation of "the different kinds of organisational and cultural forms that reproduce or transform them" (1993: 148).

In the context of community videomaking, these organisational and cultural forms may no longer be explicable in terms of concepts such as 'class' and 'community' while they remain embedded in metatheoretical frameworks which neglect much of what is specifically human about human societies - action and interaction; culture; and the social construction of reality.

Without wishing to labour the point, unless organisational questions (of form, change and reproduction) are clearly addressed, community videomaking becomes courteous and polite documentary.

## Concluding comments

It has been the assumption of this case study, that community videomaking constitutes one aspect of communication for development, inasmuch as 'development' increasingly implies participation in decision making. In order for development to take place, a programme for reconceptualising the relationships between the major agents (state, market and civil organisation) is required. The shortcomings of traditional development communication (the dominant paradigm) rest on its failure to understand the necessity to theorise at all levels, particularly the role of civil organisation (meso-level). Various notions of communications for development have emerged in the wake of this failure, variously called community media, group media, development support media, all of which aim to do exactly that - theorise the organisational aspects of communication and development.

Against this backdrop, a rather narrow discussion of the literature on community videomaking has been undertaken, stressing the work that remains to be done in terms of organisational questions. Stan Burkey (1993: 60) has summarised much of the tenor of this case study when he states

participatory processes seldom begin spontaneously. Such processes are generally initiated by a leadership whose vision is external to the perceptions and aspirations of the people concerned. Resolving this contradiction implies going beyond mere mobilisation for the support of an 'externally' defined cause.

He suggests that "participation requires organisation" (1993: 60), and that "meaningful participation implies the ability to positively influence the course of events" (1993: 59).

Finally he suggests that

participation emphasises an obligation to return knowledge to the people and encourages the people themselves to preserve this knowledge in forms available to other poor people (1993: 63).

On these three issues - initiative, organisation and preservation/availability, the videos about which Criticos and Quinlan reflect, highlight the problems faced by community videomakers. Operationalising the suggested line of thinking advocated here may not be easy, nor ultimately be that fruitful, particularly in the light of the re-organisation of videomaking itself which is implied.

There is little that is new in these suggestions, although Long's interface analysis does suggest a more coherent pinpointing of 'breakdown zones'. At the same time, the historical legacy of the development of community videomaking in South Africa does go some way to explaining why certain practices have not been clearly targeted for both theoretical and practical resolution. Many of these practices arise out of resource and time constraints which must be addressed through capacity building and media education. This will not address problems of form, which have not been discussed here. However, in a more recent study, on a series of independently produced and directed films, some of the problems touched on above are once again raised (see below).

We are now beginning to witness the birth of development support communication in South Africa, which hopefully, will be inclusive. Contributions to this debate should not revolve around traditional media formats (print in particular), but should include community videomaking as well. The growth of interactive videomaking for education is testimony to this urgency.

## **Interrogating some South African issues**

The South African transition is almost at an end, although the transformation process will continue for years to come. In the realm of politics and development, the lively contestations over the institutional frameworks of democracy now settled, with the Constitution finalised and a Growth and Development Strategy in place. At the national level then, a framework now exists which should propel us into a peaceful and prosperous future.

This section is less concerned with this national-institutional level of analysis than with the level at which real, acting subjects engage with the new society. It is concerned with ‘how’ development takes place and ‘how’ power relations structure the interface between this institutional framework and ‘subjects’. Needless to say, this interface is not between subjects and bricks and mortar, but between agents who carry with them the imperatives of policy, and agents whose lives will (hopefully) be transformed.

We cannot take this interface for granted, and retreat into a simple ‘people-state’ dynamic, for this would render our new democracy ‘procedural’, and ‘development’ a slogan. As Thompson has suggested,

Alternative research and development methodologies, and organisational structures and institutional arrangements are needed to analyse difference, explore conflicts, recognise negotiation processes and seek common ground, if the high ideals of productive, sustainable and equitable social development are to be realised (1996: 110).

Communication, however one looks at it, is central to this interface, and the emerging debate on how communication and development fit together is essentially about how communication can contribute to an authentic interface between actors. Consequently, what

follows is not a micro study, in the sense of laying bare some hidden reality, but seeks to raise questions about how the micro world of individuals connects with the macro world of social imperatives.

Beginning with an outline of the context in which media/communication is currently being thought of in relation to the interface, and raising some issues which development theory itself has contributed, this section then goes on to identify some characteristics of what is loosely called the periphery of South African society, and attempts to explore some dimensions of media/communication in this sector.

### **How did we get here?**

The communications environment in South Africa continues to be transformed in the wake of the political transition. While there are continuing policy developments around telecommunications, the press and the role of the Government's information arm, the airwaves have already been restructured (see James 2001; Gillwald 2002). The Independent Broadcasting Authority Act of 1993 established the IBA as the regulator of broadcasting activities, in order to promote, among other things (IBA 1994:4),

- (a) the provision of a diverse range of sound and television broadcasting services on a national, regional and local level, which, when viewed collectively, cater for all languages and cultural groups and provide entertainment, education and information;
- (b) the development of public, private and community broadcasting services that are responsive to needs of the public.

This has set in motion a process of wide-ranging transformation of electronic media, most notably the licensing of many community radio stations and the emergence of a new-look package of television channels delivered by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), and other private broadcasters. While the debates (and struggles) leading up to negotiations, which ultimately sanctioned the creation of the IBA, were informed by a general commitment to development, it was not until the Government of National Unity adopted the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (in 1994) that a clear set of aims and objectives, of and for development, became available for media planners. It was on the strength of the RDP, for example, that the SABC was able to produce a series of documents in 1994 and 1995 setting out a strategic path charting its contribution to development and reconstruction, for evaluation by the IBA. The commitment of the SABC to a role as a national public broadcaster through its provision of information, education and entertainment included, as a fourth performance area, the building of national unity (expression of core values) and representing the diversity and multiple identities in our society (SABC 1995: 8).

By all generally accepted standards then, South Africa has achieved a progressive transformation of an institution profoundly implicated in the reproduction of Apartheid, although the modalities of the broader transformation of the communications sector remains a source of much debate.

While the IBA has committed itself to facilitating the emergence of local-level, community media, the perspective informing this aspect of its task was firmly within the milieu of



community media as part of the struggle to abolish Apartheid. No work on the debates around 'development communication' or 'development support communication' was reflected in the theoretical elaboration of what was commonly called the alternative media (See Tomaselli and Louw 1991). The emergence of the notion of community media, or group media, has been accurately theorised by Tomaselli and Louw when they argue that "communication became a matter of democratic politics, of confronting ideology and ultimately of the redistribution of power" (1993:304).

This legacy of small, politicised oppositional media, and the necessary emphasis on transforming the national broadcasting environment has left a crucial gap at the level of the relationship between media/communications and specific development projects.

However, the issue is now firmly on the agenda, as government ministries grapple with the problem of translating new policies into information and knowledge for the people; as development planners themselves grapple with the notion of 'community', without the cement of liberation struggle; and intellectuals begin looking for comparative material on how to theorise the relationship between communication and development.

### **What have we got?**

The methodologies informing development interfaces in general have begun to be debated in South Africa; as part of attempts to assemble theoretical tools with which to understand how to change extension methods; inform curriculum development at universities; enable NGOs to codify their practices as part of the management revolution required by reduced funding; enable public service providers (e.g. library services) to 'meet people's needs'; devise

appropriate adult basic literacy programmes and so on. This interface has of course been widely debated in the field of development studies and development policy analysis, raising important questions about the meaning of 'intervention' and the bridging of theory and practise (Long 1992; Burkey 1993; Schuurman 1993; Crush 1995; Escobar 1997).

Generally speaking, there is a commitment to participatory methods, and to participatory research as the most appropriate way of establishing what action is necessary (Coetzee and Graaf 1996). However, when one seeks details of how these interventions should occur, there is not much to go on. More often than not, the real world practices are hidden beneath a rhetorical commitment. One of these intervention strategies, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), is becoming increasingly popular, and yet Jonathan Stadler's critique does not reference a single locally published article on its use (Stadler 1995).

We therefore find ourselves in South Africa at a moment where a constructive debate about intervention methodologies could (and should) contribute to theorising the relationship between media/communication and development. However, there has been little theorising, and only a handful of published works which attempt to deal with interface aspects of media/communication and development, rather than the totalised 'social development' role of a public broadcaster, which, as indicated above, has been done through the IBA.

Eric Louw's piece (1995) is the clearest statement so far of the role communication can play in development interfaces. He begins by looking at two projects; the first being an evaluation of the communications strategies delivered by communication consultants (the

Human Science Research Council) around a large scale water/irrigation project, and the second is an evaluation of the 'grassroots' media projects in the Cape, emphasising their role in 'developing a community' and 'capacity building'. On the basis of these evaluations, he goes on to develop a framework for the use of communications in development.

Louw argues that the first project was characterised by an 'information approach' (1995: 60), which is means-ends, project specific, top-down and public relations oriented. It rests on the foundations of control by outsiders and fails to engage with existing communication channels, and "often produces 'bad' communication and communication that is 'alienating' for the communities affected by such projects" (1995: 62). In the example cited by Louw, the communication 'structure' included the establishment of Information Centres when it became apparent that the local Project Committees "were not facilitating a flow of information to the affected communities" (1995: 57).

Louw contrasts this 'information approach' (essentially the mode of operation of state agencies under Apartheid) with a 'dialogical approach' which requires "media infrastructures which facilitate multidirectional and pluralistic communication (in which all stake holders talk to each other)" (1995: 60). This constitutes a model in which "all participants share their experiences, ideas and wishes in order to come to joint decisions about development" (1995: 60). A similar approach has been developed by Norma Romm, but in the context of 'action research', where a

dialogical intervention [aims] to shift power relations in society by de-authorising the viewpoints of those who hold official positions or traditional sources of power, so that alternative voices can be heard (1996: 161).

What appears initially as a rather naive view of the power relationships between ‘developer’ and ‘developed’, is tempered by Louw’s recognition that different discourses are at work in an interventionist situation. This ‘disjuncture’ can be overcome by the establishment of a

dialogical, jointly operated, multi-vocal, multidirectional, media system [which] would effectively facilitate a mutual learning process in which all the stakeholder/participants to this communication experience would come to develop a shared discourse (1995: 63).

In this formulation discourse(s) are constructed without any apparent relation to forms of existence. In contrast to this view, Norman Long has suggested that,

Knowledge processes are embedded in social processes that imply aspects of power, authority and legitimation; and they are just as likely to reflect and contribute to conflict between social groups as they are to lead to the establishment of common perceptions and interest (1992: 27).

Part of the problem Louw is confronted with is the difficulty of distinguishing between information and knowledge: he seems to be interpreting discourse as knowledge, information that has been assimilated into a culture (or habitus), when he identifies the competing discourses as “modern and premodern” (1995: 63). Knowledge in this sense is embedded in social practices, which themselves are interlaced with forms of social organisation, available resources, worldviews and so on. To speak then of a dialogical communication model, which, to all intents and purposes, brackets the accretions of social existence, and which ‘harmonises’ worldviews, is to ignore the embeddedness of knowledge in a way of life. A similar difficulty inhabits Romm’s work: she suggests that the outsider (in this case the sociologist), can access the various sets of meaning patterns by categorising them as “more or less ideological or utopian” (1996: 176).

A further difficulty with Louws' view is that there appear to be only two discourses: that of the external agency and the 'community'. This formulation runs counter to our most basic conception of the construction of social identity: indeed it harks back to the interpretation of culture as an integrating mechanism of the social system rather than as an accomplishment of actors. This view is at odds with an agency perspective, where cultural resources (symbols and practices) are the field in which we construct and reconstruct our identity.

Furthermore, the articulation of collective identities, a public voice if you like, is subject to its own internal interfacing, which may result in 'dramaturge', Robert White's best-case scenario when

the discourses of each group develop a language which simultaneously defends the internal solidarity of the group and finds some common definition of mutual rights, responsibilities and obligations (1994: 112).

In reality, it is clear that the central cleavages of class, gender, status and age provide a locus of struggles in which there is never resolution or finality. This is not to suggest that all is conflict, but all is certainly negotiation. Where the popular expressions of some set of identities and practices have been moulded into a public voice, for purposes of resisting an outside threat for example, or in contexts where authority demands it, there may be a kind of order or stability. However, one of Stadler's most telling criticisms of participatory methods is the emphasis they place on public consensus, because,

the focus on the public as opposed to the private domain also means that the dynamics which are played out in the domestic domain remain hidden" (1995: 811).

We can assume that what is meant by the achievement of 'community' in Louw's argument is the public consensus that emerges, but the extent to which this reflects 'dramaturge' is not clear from the public consensus itself.

In a less specific approach, Fourie (1994) attempts to move from a national perspective on media and development (the well-trodden path of a critique of monopolies, media access, media freedom and so on), to the level of media/communication which is linked to development projects, and he also invokes the 'community', suggesting that community radio stations, newsletters and resource centres are indispensable for increasing "the most basic level of communication, that which take place in a community" (1994: 49).

This notion of community implies a profound participation in the deliberations and outcomes associated with development. It is not inconceivable that the interfaces within a locale (in Giddens' sense, of an interactive space) may privilege some discourses rather than others.

The line of argument developed by Long and Villarreal:

that knowledge is essentially a social construction that results from, and is constantly reshaped by, the encounters and discontinuities that emerge at the point of intersection between actors' life-worlds (1993:160),

recognizes that the epistemic communities, which emerge, are not based simply on the actor, but on an actor's ability to enrol others in his or her 'project' or world-view. 'Community' (in the sense of a network of actors partially enrolled in some or other project) is a highly fluid notion and has within it the requisite need of an organising capacity. The 'fixing' of

enrolment into organisation may bring with it individuals or groups who became gatekeepers or brokers, facilitating and/or blocking knowledge encounters or providing links to more distant networks. Jackson (1997) has made much the same point in the context of her research on field-worker agency:

Project enrolment involved a number of different kinds of participant relations. There were the relations with ordinary project participants, and those with people who became brokers and facilitators (1997: 61).

Louw's argument concludes by suggesting that a specifically *communicative* intervention is required in order to establish dialogical communication, with experts conducting communication needs analysis

so that media considerations [can] be worked into the very conceptualisation and design of any development project from the very outset (1995: 64).

This communicative intervention, as Louw sees it, amounts to a participatory strategy involving different parties, with communication more smoothly integrated into the interface, facilitating a dialogue. This view is essentially a streamlining of what is clearly a transmission approach to communication, one that fails to engage with the agency of actors. This approach, sometimes called a Communication for Social Change model (Figueroa et al., 2002: iii), describes, in very optimistic terms,

a dynamic, iterative process that starts with a 'catalyst/stimulus' that can be external or internal to the community. This catalyst leads to dialogue within the community that when effective, leads to collective action and the resolution of a common problem.

This is but one of a number of technologies or models that have been developed to operationalise 'communication for development', Shirley White's (1994) transactional approach being the best known. The question that remains however is whether or not any

model, notwithstanding its flexibility, can provide a template for the successful mobilisation of communication which guarantees a specified outcome. Norman Long's perspective, focussing as it does on the interfaces associated with development, suggests that it is

important to focus upon the intervention practices as shaped by the interactions among the various participants, rather than simply on intervention models, by which is meant the ideal-typical constructions that planners, implementers or their clients have about the process (2001:72).

### **What's it like out there?**

In seeking to research communications issues in rural KwaZulu-Natal, (loosely called the *periphery*, to indicate both 'distance from a centre' and 'connection with' (as in the metaphoric use of dependency theory)), it is appropriate to look at the organisational capacities for enrolment, because epistemic communities are not concretely amenable (without a vast anthropological and ethnographic body of work) to the outsider as a general resource for planning. This of course is what makes development interventions so problematic.

Once again this approach demands a measurement regime (of civil society) but it should be clear that this is purely for heuristic purposes, and does not constitute an elision of Long's insights into the structuralism of sociology. As Long and Villareal have indicated,

Interface analysis aims to elucidate the types of social discontinuities present in such situations [enrolling others SB] and to characterising the different kinds of organisational and cultural forms that reproduce or transform them (1993: 148).

This following emphasis on organisational issues does not constitute an audit: the precursor to intervention, and the stock-in-trade of an information approach which is primarily concerned with achieving an end decided outside of the encounter.



In a provocative (and largely depressing) paper, McIntosh et al (1993: 3) pose the question

Whether and how a vibrant civil society might be fashioned in communities which rely largely on urban and welfare transfers, and where relations of dependency exist between such parties as commercial farmers, landlords, chiefs and their clients (like farm-workers/dwellers, tenants and other land holders).

Centring their research on KwaZulu-Natal, they identify a number of factors and processes which have an impact on local organisation in rural areas. In the light of the dependencies outlined above, we can identify a number of important points:

- That rural organisation “is not primarily a lobby of members’ interests. It is rather to provide mutual support; to provide mechanisms by which existing resources might be extended or preserved through collective endeavours” (1993: 3). These kinds of organisations are familiar; stokvels (credit unions), burial societies, church groups, sewing/gardening groups, buying clubs and water committees. These all have quite specific functions, and usually operate in terms of accepted rules. Citing a number of studies, these authors indicate that mutual aid organisations tend to flourish in better-resourced areas (e.g. more arable land, more migrant remittances) where there is more discretionary income.
- That resources alone are not a precondition for mutual aid activity, but also that the likely responses/ reactions of relatives and patrons, the social relationships within a collective, will be an important feature. The set of power relationships, for example, between commercial farmers (white) and farm-workers (black), where dismissal may mean destitution and homelessness, makes normal collective bargaining unthinkable for most people in this situation.

- That the rich history of popular resistance in rural areas (against dispossession, betterment planning, and the imposition of the Bantustans), are generally “defensive struggles directed at retaining access to an existing set of resources, or at recovering the resources that have been taken away” (1993: 5). The relatively weak bargaining position of rural people does not make competition to access private and public resources very attractive (many do not work where they live, disruption of social services may mean their cessation etc). Furthermore, social differentiation in rural areas means that rural resistance emerges when threats are posed to whole communities (to a whole way of life), and dissipates when it is likely to affect different ‘parts’ of a community in different ways.
- That the institutional legacy of colonialism (prefectoral rule) continues to exist although a functional system of administration has been in place for a long time. The authors identify the apparent paradox of passive acceptance of chieftaincy as the legitimate voice of the community, with quiescence towards service provision by state/provincial line departments. In other words, why does the institution of tribal authorities (which has modest powers) continue to be so influential? The authors suggest that it is because that they have fulfilled some of the functions that other institutional bodies have neglected. They also suggest that in KwaZulu-Natal, many chiefs have sought assistance through Inkatha, and that a patronage system has been established which brooks no opposition even if it is in the form of issue-based organisation.

Not only is rural organisation in a parlous state, but the frameworks which have underwritten existing organisation (i.e. resource protection, reaction to threat, sets of internal power relations), would incline one to be pessimistic about the emergence of a strong civil society in the periphery.

But more specifically, what form do epistemic communities take in reality, in the periphery? What cultural forms encapsulate local knowledge and how are these expressed organisationally among different sectors whose social characteristics predispose them towards association - men, women, youth, the old etc? These are the central questions that development communicators and development workers should be concerned with, not the 'community' in the abstracted sense of people sharing a premodern discourse or defined by some geographic boundary (although this may sometimes be appropriate).

The implications of a weak civil society are profound, particularly in the political arena because it predisposes 'outsiders' to an engagement with existing organisational structures, which may not reflect the epistemic communities of a locale. At the same time, it is all that we have to go on, if a model of development, as planned and implemented social change with quantifiable outcomes, is adopted. As McIntosh et al (1993: 11) point out, notwithstanding the careful and sustained efforts by NGOs working in the periphery, should control of projects in which they are engaged

be devolved to the local management structures, some of the benefits which disadvantaged sections of the population currently obtain would be lost because these benefits would be appropriated by the local elites who invariably dominate the area management structures.

There has been a lively debate about NGOs, and the role they might play in an emerging civil society. However, indications are, with the funding crisis deepening and a loss of leadership into government, that this sector may not be able to significantly support new organisational impulses.

### **The Rural Television Network (RTV)**

The media plays an important role in providing a source of imagery for epistemic communities. With regard to the periphery, radio is clearly pre-eminent. An interesting media form to emerge in the early 1990s was the RTV Network. Fourie (1994) for example, has singled out the Roots (sic) Television Network as a good example of using media for development.

The project, a private sector initiative, which located television sets and VCR's in rural stores, and rotated prerecorded videocassettes, has now been abandoned because of the changing strategy of the SABC (by increasing transmitter power and re-allocating channels). While in operation (1990-1995), the Rural Television Network received good reviews from both marketing/advertising commentators, and researchers interested in media for development (Burton 1994). Both viewed the mechanism as 'taking local culture seriously' and thereby meeting both the needs of the people and corporate interests whose products were promoted. This is because much of the early material was made for the network, and included stories and legends as vehicles for product promotion.

There are a number of lessons that can be learned from this attempt to bring mass media communication technology to peripheral areas:

- The research conducted into the RTV operation foregrounded the problem of measuring an audience. Against claims of 900 customers per day at each of +/-200 outlets in the KwaZulu-Natal region, we found the actual number of people in the vicinity of the television to be about a third of that (Burton 1994: 1). The indeterminacies of measuring the 'hit rate' of RTV pale into insignificance against the indeterminacies of the meanings constructed by viewers. These were not explored in much detail, as the survey method used was ill suited to the discovery of interpretative frameworks.
- The stores themselves were extremely important nodes of interpersonal communication. The majority of people interviewed at the stores used them for telephony and post; many people came to the store with the intention of meeting friends; many people saw the store as the place where chores could be combined with leisure. In fact a development initiative revolving around the stores has survived the demise of RTV itself.
- The viewers of RTV differed widely in their social characteristics and this was reflected in their identification of what they 'saw' on the television. This is particularly marked by gender, with women indicating that it was educative information they received, while men overwhelmingly identified what they 'saw' as entertainment;
- The television was clearly privileged over radio and print as a medium of information. This is not surprising considering literacy rates are low, but surprising in as much as radio has a very high penetration in rural areas. There was a very

strong identification of television with leisure and entertainment (particularly among men) which left the researchers with a sense that television as a medium, dominated in this instance with content purchased from the SABC, was already configured for people as leisure, luxury and entertainment.

While the research into the RTV mechanism only highlighted certain aspects of the relationship between media and everyday life in the periphery, and helped to consolidate sociological knowledge of social structure, it did point towards a view that poorer segments of an already impoverished rural sector were viewing television with a different set of expectations to those with jobs and more educational qualifications, who tended to expect more of the television, in terms of education, news and current affairs.

This attempt at 'cultural entrepreneurship' has now failed, but some of the additional arms of the project, not all of which died with it, are interesting.

First, the linking of the circulation of pre-recorded tapes to Roadshows, which combined product promotion with cultural activities (dancing and singing in particular), provided both a support mechanism for the mass media by bringing well-known personalities from the world of radio to these shows, and promoted a form of indigenous expression more authentic than that to be found in tourist venues where tradition is 'modernised'.

Secondly, the establishment of Ladies Clubs which provided a structured environment for product promotion, but also presumably for feedback to the RTV network itself on women's views, problems and desires.

Thirdly, the Roots Television initiative, which consisted of videoing important events so that people would see themselves on the screens in the stores, approximates some of the video experiments elsewhere in the world, although these were vehicles for product promotions.

These all constitute attempts at binding, through media or organisation, groups, on the basis of certain fields of identity, although the overall aims were not of development as such.

However, the broader perspective is more depressing: the effort which went into the privileging of local culture (Martin-Barbero's 'cultural habitat') was polluted by the appearance of 'cultures' not linked to this habitat, which creates problems in communicating the value of local culture as a vehicle for the expression of a changing social existence (Martin-Barbero 1993). The peculiar mix of 'tradition' and 'modernity' delivered through this mechanism feeds into a fantasy of what the world is like and may have contributed to ideas about development itself (Francis 2002).

As indicated above, the survey methodology made it difficult to explore the construction of actors own meanings of the RTV, not simply in terms of what they saw, but in terms of its contribution to a new site of cultural resource appropriation - a new interface.

It became clear that no in-depth exploration of these issues could be conducted without a more open-ended methodology, and a series of focus group discussions were planned for 1995.

## ***Case study 4:*** **Rural Information**

In an effort to develop a framework for focus group research, 21 in-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted (in April 1995) with a wide range of people living in rural areas of Northern KwaZulu-Natal. The interviews were based on a purposive sample of young people between the ages of 16 and 25.

These interviews were conducted in order to establish what people understood by 'information' and 'knowledge'; where it comes from and what it means for them.

What emerged from these interviews was a clear recognition that people were information-disadvantaged, particularly the young, and that the scope for social advancement was broadened by the mass media whose potential to carry educative information was perceived.

The interviews also raised the following issues:

- access to media in a domestic context is more important for younger people, with an overwhelming identification of the father as a gatekeeper, although at different times during the day;



- that the media content is an important source of conversation in the household, with the initiation of conversation fairly evenly spread around members of the household;
- that issues in the media are often the springboard for discussions about politics, behaviour (respect and obedience) and schoolwork, although the strongest voice (the father) is not usually the one most likely to counter argue with media items;
- that literacy is highly valued, and newspapers generally perceived as more important; and information carried by the press is more important;
- that the most valuable information is carried by the media rather than by word of mouth, but that the search for information is channelled through educated people or the tribal authority figures. These views are counter argued by confusion about which forms of information (mass media or word of mouth) is most believable;
- a very clear recognition of the status and gender biases in the sharing of information, and an equation of institutional authority with knowledge/information resources.

On the basis of these findings, a more systematic project of investigating questions of information was undertaken.

### **Voices from the Periphery**

These focus group discussions were held with men and women separately, from three areas falling within the boundaries of the Pilot Land Reform Program districts of KwaZulu-Natal in 1995/6. All groups were convened as 'discussion groups' with people known to the

moderator, conducted in the Zulu language and translated from tape recordings by mother-tongue Zulu speakers.

Focus groups have now become quite fashionable, and are increasingly used by non-profit research agencies involved in the evaluation of mass media projects such as electoral education campaigns, training initiatives for community radio and 'development' television (such as the Soul City program flighted by the SABC). They are not easy to set up and create many methodological problems (Lunt and Livingstone 1996). In the course of conducting its Triple Enquiry, the IBA commissioned an organisation to conduct focus groups in order to counter the "skewed understanding of media behaviour and limitations of existing research" (1995: 5), which amounts to a partial legitimisation of the methodology (at the highest level), and a devastating critique of quantitative research findings.

The issues covered included the land reform programme; an exploration of the notion of information; an exploration of media use in households; an exploration of the issue of language in the media and other general topics which emerged during discussions. Much of the discussion was around the particularities of local conditions, which does not make it easy to identify trends. There were however, some striking similarities in the views articulated.

Participants had very loose understandings of the meaning of 'information' and 'knowledge' and tended to conflate the two, although 'knowledge' appears to have the meaning of '*how to*', whereas 'information' is something that is '*passed between*', a view reminiscent of Machlup's distinction between the use of information and knowledge (Davies 1994: 4). A

definition of knowledge offered by one respondent: “it could mean to know how to cultivate a field”; and of ‘information’: “information is what someone tells other people”. Under changing conditions (both national and local) there is a tremendous need for information which is difficult to get: “we will like (sic) to get more information about how other communities have developed themselves to create jobs”. This is partly a result of the structural position of the periphery. Another respondent comments: “as I said earlier, we were oppressed so we do not know most of the things since we were not mixing with people”. A further point raised relates to the costs of accessing information: “most sources of information need money and we cannot afford it- to have TV you need a battery”.

However, these constraints have not diminished the requirements for information: “what we used to wear when we grew we do not wear today. Why, because of the times. What we wear would not be appropriate today”, and again, the recognition that the information must be sought: “to be able to develop you need to go out and mix with other people, get information, find out how other communities have made it and what they do to uplift themselves”.

This idea of ‘mixing’ comes up again and again. In response to a probe (If you do not have information do you sit and fold your arms?), a respondent commented: “no, a person must mix with other people or attend meetings... he or she will get information”, and: “if you go out you become more informed because you mix with different people... some are more educated”.

This 'mixing' does not imply a jettisoning of what was previously known: "knowledge develops, it changes depending on generations... what our forefathers used to do is no longer effective to us. Not that we have thrown away what we have learnt in the past, but we mixed what we learned with what we are learning now".

The accessing of information demonstrates that 'information' is not simply a question of finding the right medium or discourse of 'sharing' but impales everyone on the existing structure of social relationships. This is succinctly captured in the comment that, "some are sure, but like keeping the knowledge to themselves so that people can honour them", and again: "if someone who is poor stands up and says something important, [he/she] was not taken seriously, but if a rich man with a big stomach says something, even if it is not important he was taken seriously, and his word taken compared to the poor one" [men's group].

This implies that knowledge/information is part of the structuring of social relations, not a consequence of them: "people with information occupy a certain position in the community", and: "they are not at the same level with us because they tell us information which is important, which helps us, so they cannot be the same as us". This has repercussions at the level of knowledge and information sharing: "a person who holds information is an important person... a meeting cannot start without such a person".

The consequences of not having information are significant: "they do not attend meetings so they are afraid to talk because they are not sure about the information they have. They leave

everything to the committee members”, and, in the context of the mass media: “the problem is that we do not have basic knowledge of what we listen to. This is a problem to us... we do not listen with interest because we do not know what to listen to. And we think... what we are listening to is something far from us” [women’s group].

These voices foreground two significant issues: first, the emphasis on ‘mixing with other people’ in order to build up an information confidence, a resource which can then be integrated into an existing stock and which forms the baseline for deliberations, choices etc. Secondly the significance of organisational forms or ‘places’ where sharing can take place, albeit within the existing sets of power relations in operation. The difficulties around organisational forms, which require resources to establish, has already been alluded to, but this is clearly put thus (in response to a probe about mutual support organisations): “we do have them but they are not common since it depends on whether you have money or not”.

Of course the mass media does play a significant role in providing information, but primarily of a ‘distant’ kind, about national developments, and so on, and this information, or potential knowledge, remains subject to the mediations of social relationships. As one respondent noted

we do listen to development programmes, hear how women in some communities have progressed, but now our problem is that we cannot do anything about that since our men have the final say. They decide everything. Even if we would like to go out and mix with other women it is not going to be easy for us if they do not approve.

Two further comments illustrate this well: “we do not listen to the radio regularly, most of the time we are outside, because of the chores, so we are not sure what and when to listen to

the radio”, and again: “I would not rely on the information from the radio, I do not have confidence to go around talking about it. But what I hear from a meeting I can talk about since it is from the horse’s mouth”. Finally, a comment: “the radio helps us, but now the problem is that what they tell us to do is difficult to understand because we do not see what they do... there is no one to ask if you encounter difficulties”.

The mass media (radio in particular) is also subject to domestic power relations, particularly around when listening takes place: “there needs to be control of how people in the house use it” [male group] and: “I think things should happen according to a procedure” [male group] and: “children should know what is important and not important in the house. There should be an order”; and equally there is contestation over what should be listened to: “yes it does happen [controversy over what to listen to] and it is a problem because at the end, the person that succeeds is the father”; and in response to the question ‘why?’: “because he is the head of the household... his word is final (laughter)” [male group]; and again: “ sometimes we like listening to the radio but adults restrict us” [young women].

These voices should not be taken as a general voice (as a ‘communities’ views or feelings); these are individual voices that enable us to construct an understanding of the everyday practices (or some of them) relating to media/communication. Privileging these voices over the statistics of radio use is necessary if we are to go beyond the procedural dimension of mass communication flows, to the life-world of individuals in social networks and epistemic communities.

## Discussion

The political implications of this discussion have not really been explored directly but it would seem that what we wrote in 1993 still holds true:

at present [such] civil organisation is weak and largely supported by suburban NGOs. This weakness is acute among women and youth. Unless the state is able to implement a program of civil organisation which is self sustaining, the crucial interface required of a development strategy requiring action on the part of 'subjects' will stand or fall on continued state handouts (Burton et al., 1993: 11).

In addition, with widespread reports of the failure of electoral education programs in rural areas in the 1994 elections (Natal Witness 9/5/96,16/5/96; Fife and Nackerdien 1996), it is essential that more systematic attention is paid to this sector, comprising as it does nearly half the population.

Furthermore, it is necessary to go beyond the procedural dimension of empowerment, capacity building, and participation to the reality of socially differentiated epistemic communities and networks structured by a history of oppression, dependency and lack of resources.

It could be argued that the rhetoric of development communication advanced by the SABC for example, in its identification of needs - for information, education and entertainment - based on methodologies whose constructions separate them from this level of reality, amounts to nothing more than political correctness and may be nothing more than 'symbolic delivery', having more to do with nation building in its broadest sense than with development (see Barnett 1999).

Even initiatives such as Soul City, the development edutainment programme devised as a multi-media package to explore health related matters, is no more than 'a symbolic adventure'. The evidence supporting the 'change of behaviour' claims is flimsy although evidence of raising discussions is probably more realistic (See CASE 1996). Thomas Tufte (2001) would not agree with this assertion, arguing that a multi-pronged formative and summative research methodology, as applied by the Soul City team, holds out hope of demonstrating the effectiveness of media campaigns. However the use of focus groups for this evaluation research, and others, which of necessity limits the generalisability of findings, is a positive development. However, if one is committed to 'outcomes', then this research tool is not going to be of much use.

If we accept the limitations of standard quantification research tools, and begin nosing around in the nooks and crannies of social interaction, we have to acknowledge that we will not be able to construct models which will deliver clear outcomes. The RTV Network, at face value, delivered an audience to advertisers, but the 'success' of the mechanism was linked to the 'place', to the meaning of television in the periphery, to the problematic relation of traditional culture to constructed images of modernity.

The in-depth interviews and the focus groups demonstrate the significance of social structural differentiation and the location of media use and information within a fluid nexus of knowledge construction, with power relations at their heart.



Policy is about outcomes: how do we construct policy instruments in the light of these indeterminacies, of these uncertainties, and the histories peculiar to South Africa. Any discussion which relegates these mediations and methodological questions to the realm of the 'intellectual' will disregard an agency perspective, in which 'subjects' are the unit of analysis.

## **Development Support Communication**

In this section a number of significant issues related to the practice(s) of communication for development are scrutinized. As we have seen it is important to recognize the ideological baggage associated with, on the one hand, the dominant paradigm of development communication, and on the other, the more radical (and fragmented) participatory communication perspective, into which would fall the development support communication (DSC) strand. Implicit is the argument that it is less important to slavishly follow an international trend than to look at our own context in order to establish local priorities, which in turn will provide the linkage between communication and development.

Continuing to think about communication for development seems to be a worthy enterprise as we continue to see how our media landscape continues to be re-shaped. The new emerging broadcasting environment, the excitement over tele-centres and multi-purpose community centres, the launch of the Government Communication and Information Service, more money for community media, improving institutional capacity for development delivery and so on, all point to a new milieu in which issues of information, communication and development feature prominently. Inasmuch as any debate about communication and

development draws on a wide range of perspectives about what is *good*, it is appropriate to avoid such judgments in order to provide an overview of some issues that seem to be analytically important.

### **Development Support Communication: anything goes or malevolent developmentalism?**

Melkote and Steeves (2001) argue that development support communication came into existence as a response, by development practitioners, to the realities of development work. It signaled a shift from viewing communication as an input towards greater economic growth, towards

visualizing communication more holistically and as a support for people's self-determination, especially those at the grassroots (2001: 349).

In an influential paper, Ascroft and Masilela (1989) contrasted the dominant paradigm with development support communication. They counterposed these two approaches across five levels:

- Structure (authoritarian, top-down versus horizontal knowledge sharing)
- Paradigm (externally directed social change versus participatory)
- Level (international, national versus local, grassroots)
- Media (mass media versus small media, video, group and interpersonal communication)
- Effect (acceptance of exogenous ideas versus mutual understanding among participants).

While there remains much conceptual ‘fuzziness’ around the term, DSC is nevertheless increasingly used to characterize communicative aspects of development interventions. For the purist or utopian strand (as espoused by Jan Servaes and Bob White for example), the concept of participation will suffice (embodying as it does issues of power, knowledge, method and moral), while for others (such as Robert Agunga), a more pragmatic view prevails (embodying the real limits imposed by stratified and unequal societies everywhere).

Let us start by contrasting two very different views of how DSC is viewed in South Africa. On the one hand, a piece by Mariekie Burger (1998) on media campaigns, and on the other, Stephan Sonderling’s (1997) diatribe on the dangers of DSC. These two papers have been chosen in order to show, firstly, that DSC is probably broader in scope in a South African context than we may have thought, and secondly, that the whole question of development interventions remains problematic, as we have seen in the previous section.

Burger, in her evaluation of media campaigns, locates her discussion in a distinction between development communication and DSC, justifying her commitment to the latter on the basis of surveys indicating that rural people are information hungry and display a need to grapple with information issues in a small group situation (i.e., in some form of participatory manner) (1998: 145).

Her argument is that small group, face-to-face communication is the delivery mechanism valued more highly as one moves further away from the urban areas. While there are questions about the generalisability of this suggestion (knowing that the issue itself, or subject, may be a crucial determinant of the choices people make in choosing delivery

systems), the point about strategizing information campaigns according to audience, and knowledge about the audience itself are important. These two matters - audience characteristics, and our knowledge of them are central topics in what is generally called *social marketing*. It would appear that social marketing is the framework which is increasingly coming to be equated with DSC in South Africa today.

It is a framework that is not interested in lengthy interventions which are designed to facilitate a renegotiated form of life, or the gradual emergence of a social movement, the best practice of participatory communication in the Bob White and Jan Servaes type of approach, but one which is more interested in information provision for the purposes of inducing behavior change.

There is undoubtedly a need for such purposive communication, and practitioners should be involved in preparing media campaigns that will attack the information component of development needs. However, social marketing remains an ambiguous endeavor, suggesting as it does, that behavioral change can be directly traced back to a media stimulus.

Furthermore, if we look at Alan Andreasen's influential *Marketing Social Change* (1995), we find that the concept of participation is not part of the theoretical foundations of the approach, and that the real purpose and challenge of social marketing are, he suggests, "[the] need to learn what triggers action - and how social marketers can pull these triggers more often" (1995: 316). Such a viewpoint should lay to rest, once and for all, the equation of DSC and social marketing from a theoretical point of view. It does not of course remove the necessity of developing and refining communication strategies which begin with an

institutional imperative, particularly in the fields of health and welfare, where information about practices can be a matter of life and death.

Robert Hornik's illuminating study of the knowledge-behavior gap, reminds us of the necessity to think about this issue through a number of levels of analysis: structural characteristics of individuals and communities, social influences at a community level, and learned and enduring characteristics of individuals (1989: 133). Under different circumstances, each of these levels becomes more or less significant. The central problem facing purposive communication is sorting out which level of analysis is the crucial one in terms of a communication strategy with specified outcomes, and yet we do not have much research work in South Africa on this matter. While Burger's work does contribute to a growing literature on using communication for development, her interest is clearly in information campaigns, which are only one dimension of the participatory communication framework of which DSC is a part. It is interesting to note that social marketing is now seen as a legitimate field of study and reflection by the participatory school of communications for development. Schoen's (1996) article in Servaes (et al., 1996) which discusses the role of communication in effective policy implementation, specifically addresses the ways in which behavior change can best be strategised using mass communication. These are clear examples where information is being imparted which should impact on action. Melkote and Steeves conclude their analysis of social marketing by commenting that,

In general, social marketing has a commercial marketing orientation that often privileges mass communication and neglects informal communication channels that may be most salient to poorer sectors in society, especially those in rural areas (2001: 345).

Stephan Sonderling, on the other hand, provides a critique of an approach to DSC that sees it as a panacea for the problem of power inequalities in the development process, a matter we are all familiar with. His critique has little force when one brings it all home, rather than operating at the level of North-South relations. We should not confuse the sometimes questionable matter of international aid with the project of national development. His refuge in an 'alternative to development' is no place to hide when we start to think about development in our own society. Nevertheless, it is worth reminding ourselves that development projects have two contradictory components:

Participation means fostering local initiative and control; management often requires meeting certain objectives, many already established long before the project begins, maintaining accountability and central control (Craig and Porter 1997: 50),

and Sonderling is correct to question the role of the DSC agent in sustaining this tension.

Sonderling's attempt to demolish Robert Agunga's (1997) argument in favor of the professionalisation of communication workers, or DSC operatives, by suggesting that "the role of the change agent is always determined by his (sic) position within the development institution" (1997: 37), is somewhat misplaced. If development workers are committed to a participatory, people-centered approach, then it is incumbent upon them to set in motion a capacity building process prior to institutional involvement. The establishment of development committees, and training of members prior to project planning is the ideal to which we should aspire, although we know such organizations are often established in parallel with the project implementation, which can lead to all kinds of problems, as Eric Louw has shown (1995), and as has been discussed in the context of community video. Such

a question asks for a political answer. Whose version of the consensus is ultimately going to carry the day?

Far from being the agent of deception, the DSC expert, or the development professional with a DSC training, in a government department or agency, may in fact be our best hope. There are always successful extension officers, community liaison officials, fieldworker and facilitators. What makes them successful? How do they build solidarity and assist the visioning of a target group? These are the issues we should be investigating. They are about the interfaces that characterize the development intervention.

Craig and Porter argue that the development professional who is aware of the limitations imposed by project performance goals and objectives, valued practices (needs assessments, PRA's, benchmarking etc.), the homogenizing taxonomic categories constructing subjects, and time frames, should seek the "creation of space and enablement" (1997: 56). The former is an ethical and political act of allowing the development 'subjects' to make their own representations and projections, even if these run counter to the constructed frames presented to them. The latter means a determination to facilitate the 'subject's' access to the framing tools: the language of development, the planning technologies (such as LOGFRAME), and the institutional acumen, or inside story. In other words, it is the development professional's ability to develop new skills and new organizational forms which increase participation that is important. Some do this, and some don't!

If we think of DSC as playing some role in the interface between ‘ subjects’ and ‘development’, either as communication experts or as the work that development professionals do, the views of Craig and Porter (and others concerned with the straight-jacketing effects of development practices) resonate with Sonderling’s own conclusion that, “ DSC is a practical discipline, based on applied research” (1997: 40) and is thus a goal itself, never a finished product, much like the notion of participation which underlies it. It is this problem of incompleteness that makes both the idea of participation and the practice of DSC interesting in the first place.

These contrasting views of DSC as social marketing and ‘agency of deception’ illustrate the need for local practitioners and theoreticians to take the role of communication in development more seriously. Francis Nyamnjoh’s (1997: 69) comments about DSC in his overview of the Culture, Communication, Development Symposium are still appropriate,

[On DSC] it was apparent from the presentations and discussions that there are still more questions than answers. A situation compounded by the paucity of literature in the area, and the fact that local research is still unfocused and uncoordinated.

### **Emphasizing information**

Are there some general comments about the state of development information in South Africa? The final COMTASK Report, *Communications 2000* (1996) which created the framework for the new Government Communications and Information Service (GCIS), and the *Poverty and Inequality Report* (PIR) (1998), both address the issue of information for development and merit some comment.



The launch of the GCIS in May 1998 would seem to be a significant development, considering both the developmental and political history of its predecessor, the South African Communications Services. The central thrust of the GCIS will be to ensure greater co-ordination between communication and information structures within government, and the successful delivery of information about national developments (particularly to the poor and marginalized majority). In a context where 80% of government information generated never reaches the public through the media, and serious tensions exist between ministries and departments in terms of communication responsibilities, the establishment of a new framework for the production and dissemination of information is to be welcomed. The report envisages a new set of relationships between the government and the people, mediated by a range of networks and organizations (government and non-government) operating dialogically at all levels from the grassroots upwards.

The PIR is a comprehensive overview of both poverty and the policies which have been implemented to deal with it in recent years. Looking through it, we can see a number of points which have implications for the use of communication and information for development. While matters of information pervade the report, particularly the issue of data gathering for monitoring and indicator development, the specific recommendations around communication and media are to be found in sections on 'information and technology' and 'infrastructure'.

Communication is here equated with reliable telecommunications (telephony), which is seen as the mechanism most able to provide access to information which impacts upon

productivity and social networks, which in turn influences the ability of individuals and households to participate productively in the economic sphere (1998: 24). Interestingly enough, the authors suggest that the majority of poor people will be unlikely to fully utilize the information technology systems because of educational and affordability problems. Notwithstanding this caveat, the report does suggest the establishment of multi-purpose community centers (MPCCs), as does the COMTASK report, with the equipment and resources for empowering disadvantaged groups, particularly in the collecting, analyzing and sharing of information related to their development needs. This is an issue which was also raised in the Rural Development Strategy discussion paper (1995), and one which raises questions about the kind of capacity building that will have to be done in order that communities are able to utilize the resources that will become available.

This issue of building capacity is central to the PIR. The suggestion that “it is critical that the capacity to ensure that information flows take place is built up as a priority” (1998: 48), clearly relates directly to GCIS, but the report goes further, suggesting that the SABC, radio in particular, is used to inform people. Inform them about what? Nowhere does it elaborate on the kinds of information that is necessary to contribute to the breaking of the forces that perpetuate poverty, although it is clear about the need to enhance the quality of life through improved access to physical and social assets (information being a critical intangible social asset).

These reports set the stage for a much more meaningful debate about the role of information in development and nation building. While we do have a fairly active public discussion

about South Africa's position in the information economy, this debate has not really tackled the problems of information and action, of information and the knowledge gap, and the relationship between information and sustainability.

### **Institutional issues**

Part of the problem of evaluating DSC in South Africa today is that most of the people doing it, or something like it, are not in a position to reflect on their practices. Research is urgently required on how people do 'development communication', in its broadest sense, as a mobilization of communication resources in the pursuit of development goals.

We know that people in government departments, in sectors such as health, land and agriculture, welfare, and education are involved in various kinds of interventions, some of them directly developmental, in the sense of operating within a policy frame with clear objectives for identifiable beneficiaries. These communications officers, or technical assistants, are performing a wide range of tasks:

- liaising with the media,
- preparing materials for the media and stakeholders,
- organizing and coordinating events and functions,
- preparing budgets and plans,
- liaising with communities,
- training communities,
- preparing educational materials for project target groups and stakeholders.

All of this work can be characterized as DSC, although it may not be directly contributing to deepening participation within communities. This is the reality of the moment in a context where institutional capacity remains uneven, and the civil service as a whole is still firmly in a transforming mode.

This problem of institutional capacity, and the definitions of tasks associated with such capacity is a theme that is commonly referred to in the COMTASK report. The GCIS will re-affirm the importance of the communication function within departments, which for a long time has been neglected. The capacity requirements are not only on the supply side, but the COMTASK report suggests that

a more professional approach towards communications needs to be developed, including the institution of a culture of continuous evaluation of needs, audiences and objectives (1996: 41).

In order to deliver the appropriate information to the appropriate sector will require a network of delivery agents whose task it will be to provide the capacity for the target groups to seek appropriate information.

Needs assessments, it is now widely recognized, should involve those who will be served or program users (directly or indirectly) in the initial stages of defining, targeting and carrying out the research, because they will be the group most intimately effected by the findings (Kaniki 2001). The necessary data collection and research, which is part of needs assessment, is now viewed as part and parcel of the DSC endeavor, and is in line with Sonderling's views of DSC as an applied discipline. The establishment of needs is also not a once-off audit, but an ongoing process that reflects the changes that development itself

brings to people's lives. Institutions need to establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of new information on target groups, and this requires capacity building at all levels. The finding of PIR that, in an exercise to gauge the type of indicators used to measure the impact of government programs, no reference is made to participation of communities in any stage of government project implementation and impact assessment, does not bode well for the careful monitoring of information impact.

Deborah Eade (1997) has shown that capacity building can mean a number of different things, depending on whether it is seen as a means, a process, or an end, and whether it is something that is primarily aimed at strengthening organizations/institutions or the capacity of stakeholders. In the case of organizations, capacity building is aimed at improving the ability of the organization to perform activities, gain coherence in the matrix of mission-structure-activities, and fulfillment of the mission. In the arena of civil society, capacity building as a process is primarily one of fostering communication (including debate, relationship building and conflict resolution).

Information is undoubtedly vital to participation and empowerment, and is an essential resource for building knowledge, training, engaging in dialogue and decision-making. The major problem is that institutions involved in 'development' are often accountable to someone else, and must have results. This is not only a political reality (survival), but in our context, development is closely linked to governance and citizenship. As William Munro (1996: 4) has argued, development policies and plans are attempts to specify the parameters

of the new state's legitimate and appropriate role in shaping the new social order, and to secure the overarching social authority of the state.

The capacity-building project of the RDP, which aimed to empower community's themselves by placing the state within the community (at the local level) has been rolled back by the GEAR project, giving rise to the ongoing tension between development as a political process of entrenching and legitimating a new political order, and as a participatory 'people-driven' process from below. As the PIR report suggests, the realization that social assets (networks, norms, trust relationships which facilitate co-operation) are a feature of social organization which have been neglected, should contribute to the construction of programmes to build and enhance social assets through linkages, exchanges and sharing of knowledge and information at the grassroots level itself.

## **Conclusions**

There seems no easy way, in present day South Africa, to extend the debate on the role of communication in development. Since the ground breaking Symposium on Culture, Communication, Development hosted by the HSRC in 1996, and the follow-up in 1997, there has been an explosion of networking around the issues of culture and electronic communication, but little academic engagement with themes raised by a distinguished cast of local and foreign experts on DSC itself. Perhaps Srinivas Melkote's summary of problems besetting the further application of DSC, the problem of power in particular, has dampened enthusiasm, or the academic environment is not conducive to further research in the field.

Perhaps it is time to step back from the theoreticism characteristic of early DSC which was attempting to break out of the shadow of the dominant paradigm, and recognize that DSC can mean many different things. We should be thinking about some of the following issues at a minimum:

- **Facilitation:** as institutional frameworks for policy implementation are consolidated, so too a new institutionally driven process of facilitation is underway, albeit with a number of different approaches and models. What are these methods and models which underpin interventions?
- **Information:** as the importance of communication is increasingly recognized (in all its forms, but driven by the IT revolution) so there remains the problem of capacity, both in institutions and on the ground.
- **Research:** what are the research priorities for academics and practitioners in a context of nation building, GEAR and information technology? How do academics relate to the people who are directly involved in communicating around development issues?

A commitment to communication for development still poses more problems than it solves, and in a fast moving environment such as our own it remains an important task to develop our own responses and frameworks of analysis.

One of the most important tasks of development support communication is the design and implementation of communication campaigns. As we have touched on this in the course of thinking about social marketing, it remains necessary to provide examples that illustrate the

pitfalls, and progress, which can accrue to weak/strong DSC interventions. The following two case studies illustrate the complex array of processes which configure to provide for a communicative experience, as well as offering some evaluative comment on them.

### *Case study 5:* **The ESTA Campaign**

There is now a large literature dealing with information campaigns, much of it concerned with social and business marketing, which has as its central theme the issue of converting new information into new behaviours (see Singhal and Rogers 1999; Snyder 2002; Salmon 1989). Within the field of 'development communication' there is a fairly stark dichotomy between mass communication strategies to inform and educate (with the concomitant debate about effectiveness) and the burgeoning participatory approach concentrating on existing community-based communication mediums as sources of organisational strength.

Somewhere between general information campaigns, and 'communication for development', lies the 'development support communication' (DSC) approach. As we have seen, DSC is an orientation which recognizes the necessity and appropriateness of the interventionist (or institution-driven) communication strategy, without the hang-ups of developing a methodology which *will* produce certain outcomes (many of which are rather suspect anyway), and is usually committed to building capacity amongst identified groups or organisations.



The DSC approach recognizes the role and importance of communication specialists, but has its roots in a Freirean conscientisation project. One of its central tenets is the creation of a dialogue between development stakeholders/actors in the process of coming to one mind around a specific project or action, thereby ensuring that communication contributes to successful participation (Ascroft and Masilela 1998). As we have seen, there are analytic issues around this straightforward approach.

Be that as it may, the goal of participation requires careful planning, and a consideration of the ways in which various communities of interest are ‘vocalised’ in such dialogue. In other words, there is a structural dimension to DSC which is often missing in blanket information campaigns (notwithstanding the sophistication of market segmenting and so on).

Robert Hornik’s (1988) excellent review of communication for agricultural and nutritional development in the Third World identifies theory failure as the main reason for the slow pace of development, rather than the communication strategies per se. He argues that “there was a strong argument (and some evidence) that people failed to heed advice from outside not because of personal fatalism or traditionalism but because they were structurally bound to current practice” (1988: 156). In many cases of farmers failing to take up agronomist-recommended packages, for example, they did so with good economic justification (for example, an increased cost of labor required which could be sold elsewhere for a higher return). He suggests that characteristics not related to current resource availability can affect current practice.

Reluctant to fall back into individual blame theories, Hornik is of the view that potentially useful information doesn't do much flowing because conventional information distribution channels are often weak. He goes on to suggest that,

additional support for the poor flow argument comes from smaller-scale projects that do operate effectively, if only for the short term and in pilot areas..... These projects are not always evidence about effective ways of investing in information (their expansion to a mass audience may not be logistically feasible), but they are evidence that investments in information can effect desired outcomes. If done well, information programs make a difference. The question is how to do them well (1988: 158).

Hornik identifies seven prescriptions for doing information for development well:

- financial and managerial feasibility;
- responsiveness;
- message development;
- integration with other institutions;
- support in the process of change;
- patience;
- political attractiveness.

These views are similar to the problems identified by Schoen (1996: 259) when he suggests five major difficulties in developing a communication strategy: Mistakes in choosing a target audience, mistakes in deciding on communication objectives, mistakes in message design, mistakes in choosing the means and media to get a message across to the audience, and mistakes in organizing communication effectively.

He goes on to identify nine steps by which an effective communications strategy can be developed:

- determine priority issues
- list the actors involved
- analyse target group
- formulate clear objectives
- design appealing and understandable message elements
- selection of media
- design of communication
- pre-test the materials
- action plan for strategy implementation

These textbook definitions of what successful information campaigns ‘need’ tend to obscure some of the difficulties associated with them. Both Schoen and Hornik emphasize the point about strategizing information campaigns according to audience, and how important it is to have sound knowledge about the audience itself.

Notwithstanding the many models of information campaigns available (such as Hornik’s and Schoen’s above), Charles Salmon has argued that:

The search for a definitive answer to the question, ‘Are campaigns effective?’ is a search for a Minotaur, as the functions, durations, potentials, and levels of creativity and resources are exceptionally heterogeneous...As a result, we have but scant knowledge of the collective impact of campaigns on the nexus of social values and institutions that comprise the social context of campaigns” (1989: 40/1).

Consequently, we should be wary of using communication and information to try and resolve a very basic problem: 'development' is often about power and interests, and access to information and the means to communicate is part of the field that power is played out on.

With those comments in mind, we turn now to a campaign, which, on the face of it, has all the indications of a successful one. The Extension of Security of Tenure Act

Communication campaign needs to be understood in the frame of DSC, for a number of reasons:

- it was not designed with a view to changing specific behaviours (although behaviour changes are implicit in the campaign) of all individuals targeted, but to create a social environment of rights and obligations;
- it was not participatory in the 'strong' sense of being bottom-up, and 'people-driven', but is part of a transformatory thrust of rural and peri-urban social relations, based on a legislative program designed to 'right the wrongs of the past';
- it was interactive, based on good understandings of the stakeholders, using specific communications inputs (dramatic presentations, information sharing in meetings and the use of pamphlets), and backed by organisational and institutional support.

Viewed in this way, it is possible to evaluate the campaign on its merits rather than through the prism of effects alone (the dominant discourse of social marketing), namely, its sensitivity to context, choice of communication inputs, organisational/institutional factors and long term spin-offs.

## **The Task Directive**

In the wake of the passing of new legislation regulating (and protecting) the rights of occupancy on rural and peri-urban land (the Extension of Security of Tenure Act no.62 of 1997), the KwaZulu/Natal Provincial office of the Department of Land Affairs (PDLA) decided to embark on an information dissemination campaign as part of a comprehensive strategy to ensure the provisions of the Act were properly implemented.

To this end, a Communication Campaign design was drawn up by Land Affairs officials in collaboration with the organisations contracted to provide a facilitation service and the production of pamphlet sets, being the Department of Drama Studies and the Centre for Adult Education on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal respectively (Baxter 2000).

The facilitation service entailed the design of an 'info-tainment' role-play presented in a workshop framework, and the performance of this presentation in areas of KwaZulu/Natal and Mpumalanga deemed 'information poor'. The pamphlets, for occupiers and landowners, were designed to accompany the role-play and as a stand-alone information source in the regional offices.

In order to broaden the base of the campaign, Land Rights Officers from the regional offices of the PDLA underwent training in the provisions of the Act and participated fully in the construction of the role-play, a precursor to their logistical, dramatic and support role in the field.

The campaign was run between 1st of March and the 31st of August 1999, with 39 workshops conducted in KZN and 11 in Mpumalanga.

### **Evaluating the role-play**

The role play itself is made up of a series of sketches depicting recognizable tension issues in landowner/occupier relations, showing the provisions of the Act as resolutions in further sketches, with time for questions in between and at the end. The 'dramatic' presentation is heightened with songs and banners, and it is largely to the credit of the actors (or 'crew') that an engaging, witty and informative workshop/role-play has been created. The four actors have worked together for a number of years, and demonstrated professionalism, flexibility and humility in their relations with audiences, officials and project management.

The role-play sketches relied on a process of 'gentle stereotyping' reminiscent of township theatre, but never allowed this approach to denigrate any one party as the message of rights and obligations was applied, notwithstanding the wide variation in contexts (and the occasional unexpected interruption).

Video records were made of the presentation *in situ*, as well as in a studio. These were available for further group screenings.

## **Evaluating the institutional support**

The central connection, or linkage, between the role-play and landowners/occupiers has been through the Land Rights Officers (LRO's) deployed in the sub-regions of KZN and a Land Facilitation Services facilitator in Mpumulanga.

The original idea of having the LRO's play a part in the role-play itself (as a way of strengthening LRO/constituents relations) was abandoned when it became clear that such an involvement posed problems for LRO's (shyness, lack of confidence on stage and pressures of work), and they were therefore tasked with providing logistical support (arranging times and venues, publicising the event, assisting with transport, and fielding questions).

In Mpumulanga, the situation differed in that the facilitator did participate fully in the role-play with the crew, and his hard work and enthusiasm ensured that the presentations in that province were very successful.

In the course of a weeklong workshop to create the role-play, all LRO's participated fully, and brought their knowledge and experience of landowner/occupier relations to the design process, in the course of which their own familiarity with ESTA was deepened.

Much of the discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign revolved around the pivotal role of the LRO's. Subjective factors (their energy and commitment), structural positions (as related to their jobs in the regions vis-à-vis a centrally planned campaign), effectiveness (in reaching the target group, liaison with campaign managers) and knowledge

(of ESTA provisions) have all been cited as reasons for degrees of success of the presentations.

### **Evaluating the pamphlets**

It has been generally agreed that the pamphlets have been successful, particularly as a support for the role-play. The picture story format used photographs of the play, and provided an accessible way of referring back to the issues covered. This is important in a context of high illiteracy rates in rural areas. As stand alone materials, LRO reports support the view that they have been useful.

### **Evaluating the research component**

As the crew themselves have pointed out, the major aspect of the research component (pre- and post-role-play interviews) was subject to the many difficulties arising from the arrangements made for the presentations (mainly time constraints, but also locale, day of the week etc). For part of the campaign a research assistant assisted the crew with interviews, which, while carefully designed, were not conducted within a rigorous methodology, and provide indications or trends only. One hundred and nine post-role-play interviews were conducted.

While making comparisons between pre- and post-role-play audience views is not possible, it is clear from the post-role-play responses that people in attendance found it informative (96%), easy to follow (92%), enjoyable (84%), while 94% of respondents indicated they intended to use the information in the near future.



## **Evaluating the administration**

The appointed co-ordinator left in June, necessitating some adjustments to administrative roles, but without any adverse effects on the campaign.

Apart from this change in co-ordination, the consensus among participants is that the campaign has been well managed. All necessary reports have been submitted, relevant data captured (particularly the crew reports on each workshop), and the administrative role of acting as a clearinghouse for information on logistics has been achieved.

## **Externalities**

While no workshops were cancelled by the contractor, a number of workshops did not take place. The most important source of difficulty arose through the campaign overlapping with the national elections, which resulted in cancellations (double bookings in particular, but also for reasons of political tension in some areas). These cancellations put pressure on the remaining time available, particularly weekends.

A further problem encountered has been the consistent failure of employers to release farm workers to attend the workshops, particularly on weekdays, although measuring the impact of this problem is difficult. A not unrelated issue is that of tribal lands, which, although covered by the ESTA legislation, were not specifically targeted (or dealt with by the role-play) because of the sensitivity of traditional leadership in the prevailing political climate.

Another potential source of difficulty, prevailing gender relations in rural areas, has not proved to be a hindrance to the successful delivery of the message. There are reports of women being marginalized in question time due to dominant male voices, and of men and women tending to group themselves together (sometimes in separate parts of the venue), but there is no evidence to suggest that presentations were to predominantly male audiences.

Other problems affecting workshops include the long distances to be travelled (affecting starting times), the inappropriateness of certain venues (forcing the presentation to try and adapt to conditions non-conducive to learning) and the occasional interference from audience members not clear about the purpose of the event.

### **Some issues**

With 50 workshops completed, averaging around 80 participants, about 4000 rural landless occupiers received a carefully designed message about rights. Very few landowners bothered to take up the challenge (although their representation in Farmer Associations will have ensured their access to ESTA information), highlighting the stark inequalities currently existing between these two groups. In a context of relative isolation, years of arbitrary actions and lack of social and economic resources with which to improve their conditions, rural tenants on (predominantly) white owned farms now have a legal framework as a platform to secure a relatively more stable way of life.

A number of questions remain, however:

- Did the role-play have unintended consequences? Some participants thought the

crew came to return the land, others that the crew were from a political party. On the whole however, the clarity of the message and the opportunity to pose questions (to LRO's and the crew, who became very knowledgeable) left audiences in no doubts as to their rights and obligations as occupants.

- Does an entertaining and engaging medium diminish the importance of the message? No, as there is now a large body of literature on edu-tainment and info-tainment to support the view that a carefully crafted message packaged in a culturally specific, visually and orally stimulating medium is more likely to succeed in capturing an audience's attention (see Mody 1989; Snyder 2002). With word of mouth as perhaps the dominant means of sharing information in rural contexts (Leach 2001), the significance of the role-play as a 'demonstration' cannot be overestimated, lending itself to a fuller conversation among those who watched it and those who did not, than could be expected of radio (which was used to advertise the workshops).
- Do the structural and social characteristics of the occupier group render them incapable of acting once they have information? While most of the respondents to the post-role-play interview indicated they intended to use the information they received, transforming this information into knowledge ('how to') depends in no small measure on the power they have to hold landowners to the law (and in the case of tribal land, this may pose serious difficulties), which in turn is directly related to the nature of the institutional and social support they are able to draw on. It is simply not possible to provide a blanket answer to this question. While it is clear that in some areas, where occupiers have developed their own Forums (nurtured

with/through other NGOs) and have recourse to dynamic LRO's, the possibilities are good (and this view is borne out by LRO reports of many enquiries emanating from certain areas). However, there are other areas where the forms of social life are so entrenched, and occupiers so 'weak', as to make the process of empowerment through information an early stage in the process of establishing duties and obligations.

- Did the workshop create a dialogue? Yes, in the sense that the workshops were open fora for occupiers (and landowners in some instances) to question Land Affairs officials, and for Land Affairs officials to learn about the concerns of their 'constituents'. It was an opportunity for LRO's (with the support of the crew) to learn what was needed of them in particular circumstances. It was also a space for occupiers to articulate other concerns, about development needs in general and specific problems in the area. This building of capacity within the institution should lead to better service, and bring ordinary people closer to government. At the same time, Baxter has argued that one may read a form of *domestication* into the role-play: that is a performance that functions to promote that which oppresses the viewer. She suggests that the use of a number of theatrical devices (such as Boal's simultaneous dramaturgy) ensured that this did not occur (2000: 65).

## **Conclusions**

Development support communication experiences worldwide suggest that sophisticated communication strategies (using mediums for their maximum impact) have been successful

in creating the possibilities for dialogue, but not without problems (Dagron 2001). While the ESTA campaign has seen the delivery of a set of messages, the campaign itself cannot transform entrenched forms of life immediately. This truism has often been the source of much disparagement of information/communication strategies, particularly when measurement of outputs tops the agenda for implementing agencies.

However, in a context such as KwaZulu-Natal, complicated as it is by decades of rural oppression and the more recent years of politically inspired violence, the process of laying a foundation of duties and obligations, supported institutionally by a progressive ministry and a non-formal sector, is precisely the task of development support communication.

This story, however, is not over once the campaign comes to an end. There is now a real question as to the ability of the stakeholding organizations to support the intended actions of the target audience, raising the problem of evaluation itself. Information interventions are often evaluated according to their *effectiveness* as campaigns (did they reach the right audience, was the message correctly formulated) rather than in terms of their *effects* (were attitudes or behaviors changed, were people empowered to act). We shall have cause to bear this in mind when we review the Mbazwana case study (below).

Evidence from the work conducted by Esme Joaquim (2000a; 2000b), of the Association for Rural Advancement, suggests that other institutional processes made the success of the legislation itself suspect. On two issues the state is found wanting: firstly, the Legal Aid Board, in the process of transforming itself, reformulated its tariff structure in such a way as

to exclude most of the complainants; and secondly, the law was not sufficiently clearly posed as to secure convictions from a magistrate cadre who were largely of one mind with white farmers on the issue of tenant rights. In fact, Hall (2003) argues that the ESTA legislation (as well as the Land Reform Act of 1996) has been problematic from both an implementation point of view, and on the basis of the “ fundamental inequalities in which social relations on the countryside are grounded” (2003: 42). Furthermore, she suggests that landowner disdain for the law, chaotic monitoring, a focus on rights rather than development, and weak institutional capabilities, all contribute to a situation in which *any* communications intervention would ultimately fail.

Turning now to the final case study of this chapter, the intention is to provide an even broader canvas on which the DSC intervention can be foregrounded.

### ***Case Study 6:*** **The African Renaissance Project**

The African Renaissance Project consists of a 13 part series of films, and radio programs, created to illustrate some of the important developments underway in Africa in the 1990s. It sought, under the guidance of series producer Mark Kaplan, to bring together strong stories made by independent documentary producers and directors from Africa with a view to generating a public awareness about transformations on the continent.

The series followed in the wake of the successful series 'Africa: Search for Common Ground', but sought to go beyond this series by developing a framework for the use of the material for educational/advocacy purposes. To this end, a website was created, materials to accompany the film and audio components created, and organizations mobilized with a view to implementing a process of structured interventions.

The series was completed in 2001, and broadcast nationally in South Africa in the same year. At the end of the project, this author was invited to evaluate/review the activities promised by the initiative. What follows is a shortened version of the final report submitted to The Television Trust for the Environment (TVE), one of the partners in the project.

### **Evaluation Framework**

The fundamental question posed in this evaluation is: to what extent has the project succeeded in enrolling the creators and multiplier organizations into a powerful like-minded unit which has delivered an accessible range of audio, visual, print and computer mediated materials, which have been used by ordinary people in the SADC region for the general purpose of awareness and education.

This question is much more general than the specific objectives to be found in both the LOGFRAME for the project, or in the Description of the project. The objectives contained

in these documents refer to a number of general aims (rather than firm objectives), which include:

- Strengthening mediation and civil society building skills of African journalists and television producers;
- Increase the knowledge of African civil society organizations (CSOs), independent producers and broadcasters, of the main international and regional instruments for the protection of human rights;
- Increase the television broadcast time in Africa devoted to issues relating to human rights and democracy (good governance, strengthening of civil society, conflict prevention etc);
- Strengthen the media advocacy and liaison skills and media resource base of African CSOs.

As will become clear, these objectives (as contained in the documents) of this project were developed **after** the initial conceptualisation of the series, and added a dimension to the series which had not been part of the original organization, funding and distribution strategy. There is the question then, at the outset, of whether or not it is appropriate to discuss these objectives in a context where the infrastructure for their implementation had not been set in place at the outset. For example, there is a discussion about a network of Video Resource Centres and the Pan African Audio-visual Partnership in the context of the infrastructure for the activities. It would appear that such an infrastructure does not exist in any developed form.



However, distinguishing between the series and the project is of analytic usefulness only, as the project specifies the series and the implementation of other tasks.

Furthermore, the Project documents specify certain outputs: the LOGFRAME indicates three 30-minute television programs, while the Description indicates thirteen 30-minute television programs. The series then is viewed in slightly different ways across the documents.

What is not in dispute are the concrete deliverables, and, from this perspective, the project has been successful. These are:

- 13 26 minute broadcast quality television programs reflecting a range of issues, concerns and developments in contemporary Africa;
- 11 15 minute radio programs (on CD-ROM) adapted from the television programs;
- A functioning state of the art Internet site;
- A set of promotional media materials for the series;
- A set of five materials 'packs' to be used for educational purposes alongside a selection of the television programs;
- A workshop consisting of independent producers, directors and human rights specialists.

In addition, there is evidence of widespread distribution (on VHS and CD-ROM) of the radio and television programs (approximately 70 sets) through a process of request, and

during the World Conference against Racism, and distribution of broadcast quality television programs to 15 National broadcasters in the SADC region.

### **Evaluation methodology**

The methods employed for the evaluation consist of assessments of the deliverables (the 'hard' outputs) and a qualitative investigation of perceptions and attitudes towards the impact of the materials. In this regard, the assistance of Ubuntu Productions was essential in order to compile a complete listing of organizations and individuals who received the materials. These recipients, and the list of experts who attended the workshop in June 2001, constituted the pool of likely respondents. The individuals and organizations were contacted, with a view to establishing:

- The use made of the material,
- The responses of viewers,
- The programmatic aspects of usage,
- Problems and concerns about the series,
- More general questions about the project in the light of its goals and objectives.

In addition to those who received the materials, individuals associated with the project, and other individuals with knowledge of the independent documentary sector were interviewed.

Two successful trips were undertaken: to Cape Town and Johannesburg, where face-to-face interviews were conducted. All other interviews were telephonic. Notwithstanding the dissemination of materials into the SADC region, initial contact with organizations in these

countries led to a view that field trips to these countries were not warranted. A few additional contacts were discovered in the course of the interviews, but were likely to shed light on only a few of the television programs (a case in point being Namibia, where one film, River of Memory had become part of a larger conversation in that country, and which was linked to the critical success of another film by the same director).

Some crucial respondents were not interviewed: nobody at Channel Africa could comment in the wake of the departure of the contact there (and workshop participant); and the representative of AMARC was never able to respond to repeated requests for an interview (a great pity as the AMARC connection to community radio was held up as a success of the project).

### **Project related features**

Three important initiatives, in addition to the television series and radio series, are the website, the print support materials and the workshop held in Cape Town in June 2001.

The website (<http://www.africarenaissance.org/>) is a sophisticated site with links to other interesting sites, as well as information and clips about the series. This is clearly a professional site, although no dating appears on it. A message sent to the moderator elicited no response, but successful contact was made with the Ubuntu offices in Cape Town. Very few people spoken to had used the site, and there is no clear indication that the site was built with multipliers in mind (support materials are not available online).

The materials for use in support of the film (of which there are 5 'packs') are an interesting mix of factual information and guide questions. There are no facilitation guidelines. In addition there is no organizing motif holding the materials together enabling a systematic use of the films and materials as a package. Each pack is stand-alone. The reason for this is the diversity of topics and the different treatments accorded each film, making it difficult to develop an African Renaissance theme binding the materials together. This may be a strength, but very few people who had used the materials had any specific comments to make about them.

The workshop held in Cape Town in June 2001 was designed to bring together key constituencies: the directors and producers of individual films, the series producers and distributors, and representative of multiplier organizations (conduit groups who were seen as taking up the series for dissemination and use), mainly from the Human Rights advocacy and NGO sector.

A video was made of the proceedings, as well as a report. A further report on activities that participants agreed to undertake was also compiled.

The purpose of the workshop was quite explicitly outlined, in keeping with the objectives of the Project (including the development of a distribution strategy and agreement on the support materials), as well as promoting discussions about some of the broader aims (training of journalists for conflict resolution, and use of the series to promote human rights and democracy).

## **Information received**

Reported here is a synthesis of field notes and recorded interview material. Some observations are coloured by emerging impressions, although this is not a discussion of findings. As usual, many of the conversations veer off to towards description of the respondent organization and/or individual respondent.

## **Project managers**

The basic idea (as conceived by Hannes Siebert of the Media Peace Centre) behind producing a series of this nature was to provide a platform for producers in Africa with stories to tell about an African Renaissance: stories which could provide an independent perspective on ordinary people taking control of their lives in different parts of the continent. This was not to be an issue driven series, but an auteur based approach which sought to draw on the many compelling visions of societies in transition in Africa. No one theme (such as conflict resolution in the 'Common Ground' series) holds the series together. It was felt that the series would contribute to a process of audience identification, in which people would be able to identify with different stories and perspectives. It is worth noting that the series producer took over the conceptualising of the project when the originator left Ubuntu Productions. The loose and adaptable approach (no imposition on producers) dovetailed with a recognition that the most cost effective way of creating the series would be through buying in completed films.

Other important issues to be raised by both Mark Kaplan of Ubuntu Productions (series producer) and Dan Jawitz of ICE Media (executive producer) concern the financing of the

series. One perspective is that full budget was never achieved, notwithstanding initial funding from the SABC and an American partner (who left midway), and that TVE assisted by accessing European Union funding for completion of the series (production costs for the final three television programs). The funding of the series has not been investigated in any comprehensive way, but funding is a crucial issue insofar as it determined how activities were prioritised. This production team (initially Ubuntu Productions, but also ICE Media, who joined the series as distributors), like many other individuals in the documentary field, rely heavily on co-funding for the production of independent films, and the timing of inflows of money impacts on the process of production. For example, money raised for one purpose ends up being used for another purpose, and then replaced when new funding is secured. African Renaissance was no different. While it is evident that money earmarked for distribution may have been used for versioning the radio programs, this issue was not seen as particularly relevant to the ultimate purpose of having the series provide a platform for multipliers (other organizations) to incorporate the material into programs designed for educational purposes.

The producers and distributors argue that the series was made, and the contacts among multiplier organizations were made, and questions about the use are therefore beyond the scope of the production and distribution personnel. At the same time, doubts have been expressed about the resources available for a dedicated person to oversee the process of integrating the material into multiplier organization's activities.

There is a certain defensiveness about this view, which may have more to do with an implicit understanding of the organizational shortcomings of the producers/distributors than with a desire to truly distance themselves from the series after completion. Perhaps this is about the juggling of resources to make the final series, and a failure to create an organizational infrastructure capable of seeing the project through (as an educational and CSO strengthening initiative). However, there are indications, from other people associated with the project, that would imply a certain level of neglect, on the basis of the plethora of tasks falling to a small team whose interests were more closely associated with directing, than with developing and maintaining close links with the organizations enrolled to drive the civil society objectives.

The feelings expressed by both Mark Kaplan and Dan Jawitz, that the series was too big ('trying to fly before we could walk') and the funding so difficult, are also worth considering. The new series, dogged by changing personnel and cash flow problems, asked of a seasoned director that he be a series producer, and locked the production and distribution team into a donor driven set of activities simply to get the job done. The series was ostensibly directed at a world audience (not only Africa, although produced and directed by Africans), offering a vision of Africa at the turn of the century through independent storytelling on film.

### **Multiplier organizations**

This section reflects perspectives from true multiplier organizations: those with objectives of making an intervention, rather than representing group interests. These are bodies that are

somewhere between community development NGOs and institutes (knowledge and advocacy driven).

Parts of the series have been shown widely, as in programs with a Human Rights orientation. For example, the International Human Rights Exchange Program has integrated four of the television programs into a public program, as has the Mellon Foundation based at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The History Dept at UCT has also used parts of the series in a Conference on Film and History in Africa. The open-ended nature of many of the films makes them ideal vehicles for general discussion about issues, particularly in a context of general educational studies. At the same time, reservations were expressed about the availability of the films from a central point in Cape Town. Christiana Dankbar of the Institute for Human Rights Education has indicated that audiences at these screenings will be asked to write about the films that are shown (mainly to visitors to South Africa, and local NGOs).

Similarly, the Constitution and Bill of Rights Education Project, based in Stellenbosch, has used the videos with the resource packs and commented that, "it is quite a valuable tool to use in terms of training especially in a workshop situation". This organization is one of the few to return a compilation of responses to the videotapes: not evaluations of their usefulness, but people's responses to the issues raised. In addition, facilitator evaluation forms for two of the resource packs used (Narrative of Betrayal, and African Voices/Even in Paradise) are provided: both are identified as being 'very helpful'.



Thapelo Makushane from the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (and a workshop participant) indicated that one of the films in the series had been used at a workshop in Ghana, where it was well received in a context of reflection on the role of media in reconciliation. This organization does use media materials for training, and sees the series as one source of such material.

Tali Nates at the Foundation for Tolerance Education was very positive about two of the films and was intending to integrate parts into a very broad based education program in schools in Gauteng. This organization has a sophisticated set of materials targeting different age groups, and this use of the series is promising.

At a community level, Molo Songololo has used two of the videos: River of Memory has been shown to youth groups extensively as part of a conflict management program. There was a suggestion that the resource pack was not well enough developed to specify the essential issues in the video.

Further afield, Talent Nyathi of the Zimbabwean based African Community Publishing and Development Trust (with partners in the form of the Civic Education Network) took a set of videos and radio programs to national meetings in 2001. Her views were that some of the videos resonated strongly with local issues (River of Memory and Where Truth Lies), but left people angry and fearful, as they were shown without any facilitation or guidelines for use. She argued that resources were needed to give the videos a proper airing (radio

programs were unsuitable because of the technology). She specifically mentioned mobile video units as a possible way of moving the material around the country.

Dr Ester I Niro from All Africa Women for Peace offered similar sentiments, suggesting that the videos shown without facilitation made people angry without providing relief from their anger.

Other workshop delegates who received the series have not yet integrated the material into their programs: this includes the Botswana based Centre for Human Rights; the Malawi based Sustainable Development Network; the Pretoria based Lawyers for Human Rights (represented by the chairman of the workshop, Dr Vinodh Jaichand); the Durban based FAHAMU, and the Cape Town based Centre for Conflict Resolution (which had not received the material). Some of these delegates have discussed plans to use the films. Very few of the organizations who received the series at World Conference Against Racism were contactable, and then it was difficult to find the right people.

### **Media multipliers**

Finally, we come to organizations that offered a perspective on the initiative from a development support communication position. These are groups who attended the workshop or received the series, and indicated some possible useful contribution, but failed, one way or another, to successfully use the material. All have the distinction of having provided a commentary on the approach adopted by the series producers/distributors.

The Film Resource Unit (FRU) was unable to provide any information beyond the fact that they have the series. This conversation highlighted the vexed issue of rights to the material.

Apparently no agreement has been signed between ICE Media and FRU, which, as time goes by, allows the series to fall into disuse (apart from festival screenings).

The representative from Community Video Education Trust (CVET), John Tyndall argued that the central problem with a project such as African Renaissance is that of contributing to the mounting of programs. 'Filmmakers want to be filmmakers' and rarely do they spend time outside of the production cycle in order to ensure that their products are integrated into existing educational or community initiatives. Such initiatives are most likely to succeed when they are a response to a need or community request (like information around HIV/AIDS). CVET is involved in audience development programs built around community issues so that film literacy is developed at the same time as educational material is shown (a good case is *The Foreigner*, which has a facilitation guide on the poster). The philosophy that underpins CVET's approach is the *production partnership* through which a videotape component is created with a community or group, which is jointly 'owned' and which fits into a program. The question raised by CVET is this: do these films meet the interests of the people who are going to watch them?

Chris Kabwato from Southern African Communication for Development (SACOD) has had two parts of the series shown at the SACOD Forum in October 2001 (a networking and training platform) in which producers and others can discuss their work. More importantly though is the concern that there was never support for showing the programs through mobile video units (in Lesotho and Zimbabwe), and no real effort was made to contact distribution networks in neighbouring countries. He expressed his disappointment at finding no support

for this initiative, which may have contributed to a wider debate about the idea of an African Renaissance. He suggested that the workshop should have come before the series was put together<sup>7</sup>.

John Barker of Article 19, an advocacy organization in the media and communications field, active in Southern Africa, also touched on the question of approach. His view was that a series with the kind of objectives outlined above 'needs to be a collaboration between producers (video makers) and human rights organizations'. This group was only brought in at the end of the process of putting the series together, and this compromised the usefulness of the series as educational material. This perspective is a common one in the participatory communication framework. As Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada have indicated

The need for people to acquire new knowledge and skills is as important as ever in development programmes, but information and training activities should be based on people's interests and needs, as identified with them (1998: 59).

Furthermore, the fact that the films were all made by different people with different visions makes it difficult to use the series for advocacy work. The linking of the series (with all major decisions already made) to human rights issues is a funder-led approach, and is a general problem with the sector. An opinion was expressed that a mass media approach has real problems of carry over from place to place (whereas theatre is a much more flexible medium). In addition, relying on broadcasters is a very poor way of ensuring that good material is aired as it is seldom researched, and nobody knows who has seen it. Finally, while there is evidence that some of the programs have been used (and distributed, by

---

<sup>7</sup> Keyan Tomaselli, guest speaker at SACOD's Workshop (2001) provided an outline of different approaches to development communication (further developed in Tomaselli and Shepperson (2002) which clearly distinguishes between Development Support Communication and Participatory, or Another Development. The AR Project, according to this perspective would fall into the former category.

AMARC, for example), for an initiative like this to be successful a more specialized approach is needed: to develop a market for such material a more participatory sensibility is essential, and a clearer understanding of the dynamics of successful usage needs to be established.

## **Issues arising**

There are many different perspectives on the project, and a range of competing arguments which cannot be easily dismissed in order to arrive at a simple conclusion.

The central issues that stand in the way of proclaiming the project 'successful' are:

- A number of problems with the organizational unfolding of the project: the change in personnel at the early stages and the burden this placed on Ubuntu Productions, leading in turn to the collaboration with a distributor which was not part of the founding concept;
- A number of problems with the funding arrangements leading to the expansion of the project in the direction of advocacy and education when the series concept did not easily fall into this category of production;
- A number of problems with successfully constructing and maintaining an infrastructure for the monitoring of the circulation of the material to the identified multipliers, and going beyond this target group if necessary, to achieve the necessary exposure and use of the material;
- A failure to monitor the views and perspectives of organizations more closely involved in using media for developmental and educational purposes;

- A failure on the part of multipliers (and other organizations present at the workshop in particular) to maintain their own impetus as potential partners in the project;
- A distribution strategy which remained geared to sales and broadcast, and which was series focused, rather than selectively targeting potential outlets;
- A sense of completion on the part of the producers/distributor when the ‘hard’ deliverables were achieved, whereas in reality, the project was never going to be ‘complete’;
- Little progress made on involving journalists, least of all from Africa in general, and no success in cascading conflict resolution skills or human rights awareness generally in Africa;
- Little evidence of the strengthening of CSO’s in the region;

The central issues that stand in the way of proclaiming the project a ‘failure’ are:

- The television series was made, and broadcast nationally in South Africa, to some critical acclaim;
- The radio programs were made, (and language versioned) and, apparently, widely distributed through AMARC and Worldspace;
- A successful workshop was held, bringing together the significant actors specified in the project plan;

- A great many multiplier organizations have used the series (or parts of the series) in their work in the region;
- Some good contacts were transformed into potential longer term partnerships, and a dialogue opened up;
- A sense of reflection, and responsibility, does exist amongst people associated with the project;
- Individual films in the series have garnered critical acclaim and provided an important platform for a critical engagement with the issues raised in them. This has provided a good platform for the series as a whole.

### **Lessons learned**

Perhaps the most important lesson to be derived from this evaluation is the recognition that non-issue based filmmaking will always stand in a creative tension with more directly interventionist perspectives on using film/radio for developmental, advocacy and educational/awareness purposes. This tension is more likely to occur when the production team is drawn from the directing side of the filmmaking spectrum.

Furthermore, the drive to have ideas and concepts translated into film is a powerful impetus in a context where documentary filmmaking has not been institutionally well supported, and the funding arrangements are complicated (not least of all by donors and private sector sponsors with their own agenda's).

At the same time as we make allowances for the contextual pressures and historical milieu, there can be no excuses for allowing responsibilities, that are clearly identified, to be neglected. In the context of African Renaissance, the level of support for the liaison with multipliers, and the monitoring of the circulation and use of the materials have proved to be inadequate. This is a joint responsibility of all those associated with the project.

For future projects of this nature, a dedicated team or individual must be resourced for an agreed length of time to oversee the outreach component of the project.

On the question of the usefulness of the material, it should have been clear within six months of the workshop whether or not the identified multipliers were actually doing what they agreed to do, and if not, some understanding should have been reached as to the reasons for this. Without a clearly defined knowledge of how/when/where material might be useful (because of the process of building the series without strong input from potential users), a more careful monitoring of which parts of the series were proving useful, and in what ways, should have emerged. Instead, the project management continued to see the series as a whole in terms of distribution.

In future, some assessment of the strong and weak elements of the series must be translated into strategies for distribution, rather than a regional basis, as was the case for African Renaissance. Let the strong elements of the series pull the weaker elements into consideration. The project managers do have views about which elements of the series were strong/weak, but this was not factored into the way these elements were marketed and



distributed. Furthermore, in the light of weak responses from multipliers, based on their difficulties in using the material, other outlets (like Universities) with a more film literate audience should be targeted.

If there are concerns about the way in which parts of the series are used, and this should be clear from the monitoring, as suggested above, then a more systematic approach to developing support materials should be adopted, within a specific timeframe. There is evidence that some multipliers have not yet received support materials, and some of the problems of grassroots screenings point to the difficulties inherent in not having adequate facilitation and support materials.

Clearer budget lines, timeframes and collaboration strategies are required if the support materials are going to add impetus to multiplier partnerships, and learning between producers, distributors and multipliers enhanced.

Clearly, the management of the project did not have adequate knowledge of the purposes of other media organizations, or chose to ignore such information. The perspectives emerging from SACOD, CVET and Article 19, all geared more to the developmental approach to media, indicate a well-established (if under resourced) presence in, and knowledge base, of the region. These are important voices in the field of independent documentary, and should have been closer to the project. While the completion of the series was the priority, an increased level of responsibility towards the developmental component of the project could have enhanced the success of the series itself.

Inasmuch as the project had clearly defined objectives relating to the media in the region, more collaboration between organizations in the field is necessary.

While the series was an ambitious undertaking, the project itself was complex and multi-faceted. The idea of the website, to provide an additional dimension to the series and envisaged activities, is a good one, but appears to have been under-utilised and slightly removed from the main activities. There is no real linkage between the different aspects of the project so as to exploit the internet dimension. It is difficult to assess the marketing benefits of the website.

The internet should serve as a support for activities, and should carry materials needed by multipliers (facilitation guides, factsheets, organization evaluation forms, and participant evaluation forms) if it is to assist people in the field. Furthermore, links to useful content sites of relevance to the envisaged activities need to be provided.

## **Conclusions**

This evaluation has made no mention of the series of films and radio programs themselves, covering topics as diverse as domestic work in Morocco, the World Bank in Uganda, the future of Angola and the life of a slave woman in Cape Town. These were interesting, and occasionally, riveting viewing and listening. However, they are a disparate collection (topically and ‘filmically’) with no thread running through them to provide body to the African Renaissance theme. This ensured that it was always going to be difficult to integrate them into a useable package, and pointed to a broadcast life rather than a

training/advocacy/awareness life. People associated with the project were under no illusions about this, but believed that multipliers would be able to find ways of turning the material to good use in a context of a shortage of quality material from, and about, Africa.

This emphasis on broadcast has made it difficult to assess the reach of the series, particularly in the realm of radio. Perhaps millions of people have heard some of these programs, but it has not been possible to establish any facts. We do know that many people in South Africa have seen some, or all, of the series of films, but we will never know what they mean to these people. Perhaps this is what the independent media is all about: offering a vision, a perspective, in the hope that someone, somewhere will find it interesting. This kind of work may be necessary, not only because we can never be sure, exactly, what people need, but also because it is often the inspiration behind new forms of creative endeavour.

Representations of, and about Africa, benefit from this open-ended story telling, and the success or failure of one ambitious project should remind us, again, of the importance of maintaining a space of independence around which people can congregate (without pre-planned outcomes) in the interests of a fuller life.

After all is said and done, European funding has been accessed in order to complete a project which had no realistic chance of success, and which may have raised expectations that were not fulfilled. As a development support communication endeavour then, it adds to the many projects which claim a communication for development pedigree (with all the discursive hallmarks so roundly criticized by opponents of Western development practice)

but provide only an example of 'worst' practice. It is indeed ironic that a leading African intellectual should comment that

The African Renaissance project offers us an opportunity to reflect on our condition, to reflect on our rudders and to develop new paradigms.....to pause and reflect, with the benefits of hindsight, on the benefits of Westernisation (Ntuli 2002: 60)

The author is of course referring to the pan-African cause of renewal popularised by Thabo Mbeki, and not to a series of films and radio programs. By outlining the shortcomings of the latter we are foregrounding the ethical dimension of communication interventions, and the practice of DSC. In this case, Sonderling (1997) is probably correct to characterise DSC as malevolent developmentalism: top-down, pre-planned, with a veneer of participatory rhetoric. It is clearly a missed opportunity.

This case study raises important questions about the measurement of success: the comments above do not suggest appropriate ways in which such a project can be measured for success or failure, merely compare the objectives against outcomes. Some would argue that it has been successful, inasmuch as some (but not all) agencies working with the material have found it useful.

## **Concluding comments**

Robert White (2003: 11) has suggested recently that,

In general, research and publication on communication and development has enjoyed a remarkable flowering over the past five years, but it needs to move on to another stage.

Why move on? Primarily because of the overly formalistic and rationalistic frameworks currently in vogue, the proliferation of micro-level studies, and the power of neo-liberal

policies, all of which fail to shift the balance of forces towards increased social power for the poor. Presumably White is looking for the platform of knowledge and policy, which does empower. Such a platform, sadly, is not simply waiting to be uncovered, and those interventions which have been documented here merely reinforce the general thesis of this section: communicative interventions for 'development' are complex, multi-layered and 'multi-agented' phenomenon.

This complexity is currently under intense scrutiny with the growing significance of educational entertainment, or edutainment, internationally. As if successful social marketing is not difficult enough, Thomas Tufte for example, is inclined to read certain edutainment interventions as reaching further than 'pulling triggers' or 'branding', bringing it closer to a participatory approach, characterised by

articulating community activism, stimulating processes of empowerment, and challenging power structures in society (2001: 33).

These are clearly the kinds of outcomes intended by the African Renaissance project. While Tufte is optimistic about these possibilities, he does acknowledge that "substantial work remains to be done in developing indicators to assess and analyse the causal links between media interventions, such as Soul City, and actual changes" (2001: 45). This comment implies that it is possible to establish causal links between interventions and social changes. Some things can be measured of course, but the argument in this chapter is towards an elaboration of the many disjunctures, as well as the meaningful and structural realities, that are negotiated in the course of constructing interventions.

In fact, results from the evaluation of Soul City 4 (Soul City 2001) point to a rather modest impact on society, and reflect a shift away from behaviour change towards social change.

The report suggest some successes:

- Increase in knowledge and awareness on issues of violence against women, HIV/AIDS and youth sexuality;
- An improvement in personal attitudes and beliefs around issues of domestic violence and HIV/AIDS;
- Success in stimulating interpersonal communication around domestic violence and HIV/AIDS;
- Improvement in intention towards positive behaviour around domestic violence, HIV/AIDS and youth sex;
- Influencing community leaders, and creating a community dialogue.

The report admits of no compelling evidence of quantitatively measurable behaviour change on issues of domestic violence and HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, the report is honest enough to identify areas in which the initiative was not successful:

- Changing personal attitudes pertaining to sexual behaviour;
- changing attitudes and perceptions of social norms around sexual harassment;
- increasing an awareness of what constitutes sexual harassment.

A similarly optimistic, although attenuated, conclusion is also drawn by Smith (2002), in her evaluation of *Yizo Yizo* (a popular docu-drama shown on SABC) which she argues

specifically eschews the “message driven content of educative programmes” (2002: 10).

Seeking to establish whether (and how) the series fosters dialogue, and drawing attention to the multimedia approach, Smith ultimately is unable to go beyond the in-house conclusions of the SABC evaluation itself. While the series advocated mobilisation, and offered role models, the results that Smith offers us suggests that the series created a conversation: between parents and schoolchildren; and among schoolchildren, about attitudes (for example, about their power to change conditions at school, or whether criminals should be handed over to the police) (2002: 11).

In a more thorough evaluation of *Yizo Yizo*, The Research Partnership (1999) indicates that reported audience behaviour change needs to be treated with caution, as the evaluators had no way of validating such reports, and is honest enough to remark on the negative impact of the series. Much more impressive than the claims of behaviour change, are the clear indications of the series creating discussion among a diverse group of viewers (school pupils, teachers, principals and parents) on a number of themes (corruption, drugs, and a culture of learning), and, once again, an honest appraisal of the failure to create such conversations (around sexual harassment, rape and the carrying of guns).

One final comment on the issue of media campaigns belongs to the current *loveLife* intervention. In a vigorous on-line debate held in October 2002 (moderated by the Communication Initiative) some of the issues touched upon previously were highlighted. Warren Feek, in his summary of the debate identified three important issues:

- That communication interventions without efforts to address the underlying factors propelling certain social behaviours (in this case HIV/AIDS) are seldom successful;
- That claims about successful interventions need to be backed by rigorous and open review of the data (which in the case of *loveLife*, has been disputed);
- Cultural and demographic categories mobilised by interventions are often disputed (as part of a general discussion about identities and epidemiology) and the meanings coded into mass media are open to interpretation.

Responding to *loveLife*'s claim that 60% of South African youth, 12yrs-17yrs old, were aware of *loveLife*, and that 70% of this group reported some sex-related behaviour change,

Feek points out that:

The clear inference from the *loveLife* claim is that *loveLife* made the difference. I assume that *loveLife* can make that claim from research that will stand peer scrutiny. But the claim requires rigorous review. Does awareness of a brand connect to such substantial behavior change? What of all the other factors in a young person's life – what role/contribution did they play? How about the other national and local HIV/AIDS initiatives - of which there are hundreds? Why is it that *loveLife* is the causal factor? If *loveLife* can demonstrate this connection it can make the claim. If it cannot, other consequences, for example, a strategic rethink, follow.

This is the point that is recognizably at the heart of any knowledge gap, and is not a particularly novel one either. Robert Hornik spelled this out some time ago (1989: 134):

This emphasises the need to consider carefully what type of knowledge is being measured in a particular study. One wants to be sure not to confuse mere recognition of a solution with sufficient knowledge of how it is used and what problem it solves, if this latter knowledge is what is required if knowledge is to lead to practice. Weaker measures of knowledge (like the recognition measure) may be useful indicators of a more developed level of knowledge, but they are not the same thing.



The binding together of different approaches in the context of communication for development locks us into the problem of choosing an appropriate method: this is no better illustrated than by the findings of the Human Sciences Research Council nationwide study on attitudes, perceptions (and behavioural trends) towards HIV/AIDS:

Although there is a general awareness of HIV/AIDS, most respondents still require further and more detailed information. This suggests that mass media campaigns are insufficient as systems of delivery, and other communication channels, particularly dialogue-oriented approaches should be considered” (Human Sciences Research Council 2002: 100)

We close this chapter then by reflecting on the wide range of communication for development possibilities: from the small scale, local community-based intervention (with all the questions that this brings about intervention practices), through to the centrally planned mass media-driven initiatives which are currently a feature of South African efforts to engage with particular socially defined problems. On the way we have had reason to question some of the underlying assumptions associated with the development interface, and noted the many disjunctures and ‘breakdown zones’ that are possible in these activities.

# Chapter 3

## Information superhighways and cul de sacs

In the last few decades the information revolution is changing the very source of wealth, and even more dramatically than the Industrial Revolution. The new source of wealth is not material, it is information, knowledge applied to work to create value. The pursuit of wealth is now largely the pursuit of information, and the application of information to the means of production..... The information economy changes everything from how we make a living to how and by whom the world is run (Wriston 1992 quoted in Hill 1998: 3).

This quotation, one of many likely to be found on the business pages of newspapers, or the notes of motivational speakers, is bad history (and sociology and political studies too), but offers a popular exemplar of everyday discourse on the 'new world'. While some conceptual looseness is characteristic of social science in general, it has become particularly sharp as the communications and information revolution has begun to shape the very way in which we describe society. It is common cause that we live in the 'information age' or 'the information society'. The current fascination with communication, information, knowledge, discourse, the media, computers and so on seems to be displacing many of the traditional theoretical frameworks underpinning social science, and yearns to provide new ways of thinking about some of the central sociological questions of the last century.

Frank Webster (1995) has suggested that it is possible to consider five central aspects to any discussion of the idea of 'the informatisation of society': technological, economic, occupational, spatial and cultural. If we consider, for example,

- the growing influence of computers (their power and applications);
- the rise of information industries (education and media in particular);
- the changing nature of work (in 'the knowledge society');
- the growth of networks;
- the explosion of signification (sign systems) through the media and so on,

it is clear that thinking about matters of information and communication requires a multidisciplinary approach, and one which is prepared to survey a wide range of social phenomena in order to develop a coherent overview of the substance of these claims.

Furthermore, while it is easy to slip into the common language or discourse of the 'information age', as in the quotation above, it is worth noting that there remains a great deal of debate about the kinds of societies emerging through this process of informatisation, and their relations with each other (Castells 1999). These debates are often held within a larger debate about the appropriate approach of the social sciences to many of the challenges wrought by social change. Central to this debate are two schools of thought: on the one hand, those theorists affirming the continuities with pre-existing forms of life (the 'modernists', such as Anthony Giddens, David Harvey and Jurgen Habermas) and those arguing that we are now looking at a qualitatively different form of life arising from informatisation (the 'postmodernists', such as Jean Baudrillard, Jean-Francois Lyotard and Mark Poster). The former, while recognizing significant global changes, set informatisation

in a complex web of historical antecedents and continuities, while the latter group endorses the primacy of change over continuity. This categorization of theorists is a fairly blunt instrument, and merely serves here to support a general agreement that the contemporary world is a complex one: perhaps more complex because of our growing interconnected-ness (see Stehr 2001).

However, it is not the purpose of this chapter to explore the various debates arising from the challenge of informatisation. What is important is the widespread view that societies everywhere are in a critical phase of change, often characterized as globalization, and an often uncritical 'common sense' about the power of new technologies to lead to a fundamental transformation of all societies.

Much of this discussion revolves around the idea of information as a potent weapon against poverty, marginalization and exclusion. Merridy Wilson (2002) has provided an excellent overview of the central discursive elements of these claims, and more significantly, who articulates them. She points out that "what is meant by the terms information and knowledge is seldom specified in the ICT and development texts" (2002: 92).

What is *information*? There is no simple definition of this concept (Braman 1989), because it is an abstraction, rather than a thing. It is all too easy, however, to think of information as *something* that can be dumped into the heads of individuals, which corresponds to an existing reality independent of an observer (the communication theory of the 'dominant paradigm').

In contrast to this perspective, John Feather suggests information is “a sub-set of knowledge which is recorded in some symbolic form” (1998: 118). Information can therefore be considered as something meaningful which we experience through some medium (a voice, a word, a television set, a computer etc). This page, too, is information. Each word is recognizable to an English reader. The word ‘recognizable’ is pretty clean information. We either know what it means or we don’t. Once we convert the marks on the page to meaning, we give the word our own personal stamp. Some words are conventionally more widely interpreted in a similar way, and others are often hotly contested.

This suggests that communication is both a means of sharing information and a complex cultural and personal interpretation of that information. Communication is therefore a **process** involving some means of conveying information (voice, image or other technology) and understanding it (or decoding it). We can then suggest the following: without the appropriate interpretative skills (which are personal and socio-cultural), some information is not information at all. For example, if the marks on this page were in the marks of the Chinese language, very few of us would decode it satisfactorily, although it would still have some meaning (‘I don’t understand this’ and ‘we need a translator’).

This leads on to the question of the value of information. It is clear that information which is useful is more valuable than that which is not, and this will depend on the particular user and his/her needs, interests and capabilities, at particular times and places. The value of information is an uncertainty. It is this uncertainty with respect to the value of information that has made the question of information *for* development complicated: it implies that

anyone designing information packages or communication strategies for developing contexts must have a thorough understanding of user needs and user capabilities. In other words, a certain form of surveillance is essential. An interface analysis suggests that the apparent simplicity of this powerful truism can lead to the neglect of that which is so characteristic of such interventions: information is part of the process of structuring the social relationships involved. The endless examination or surveillance of the receiver (or recipient) is reminiscent of the search for an audience by media organizations (Ang 1994), and the trigger pulling of the social marketers.

However, we do need to distinguish *knowledge* from *information* even though we have learned something of the way ordinary people see the difference. Generally speaking we would consider knowledge to be an asset or a capability of the human mind (although sometimes it only seems to exist in its practical manifestations: how to do something), whereas information always has its vehicle (a symbolic system that can be interpreted, like the marks on this page). If we speak loosely of *transferring knowledge* we are assuming that receivers are interpreting information, carried through some channel of communication, in exactly the same way as it was intended (the Frerean 'transmission model'). However, there is general agreement that the socially mediated nature of all communication renders the assumption of perfect duplication of information untenable (Lull 1994). Considering this approach to knowledge, we should be wary of ideas like 'the knowledge society', which have more to do with economic structure than with a process of homogenizing knowledge throughout society. This idea of homogenization is an important aspect of the criticisms leveled at powerful media organizations (and their parent states) in the debate around

cultural imperialism. As we have seen, in a South African context, access to, and appropriation of, cultural resources are a mediated affair.

While it is possible to support the views of Mundy and Compton, who draw a useful distinction between knowledge and information (based on the work of Paolo Freire), it is important to note that there is a strong sociality in what appears to be an individualistic series of actions:

Knowledge is the process of knowing, of individual cognition. It resides in people. It cannot be communicated but is created in the minds of individuals as a result of each person's perceptions of the environment or through communication with others. An information sender must first encode knowledge into a form of information and transmit this (1995: 112).

To take this further and turn it around - Liz Orna (1999:8) suggests that before information can be used it has to be transformed into knowledge in human minds, and then applied by them to affect the material world and the ideas of others. She suggests that knowledge and information are separate but interacting entities: we transform one into another constantly, and according to the circumstances one or the other will be to the fore.

Knowledge and information are therefore the products of human activity, and as such cannot be separated from human interest. As we think of its production, it is necessary to recall that information and knowledge are a means of social organization (and control). This has led to a great deal of research about how powerful groups are able to represent the world (and themselves) to others through communicating information (and the concept of ideology has become a useful tool for this) (see Fourie 2001: 311-325). The ability of powerful groups

and organizations to shape opinion and world views has led, in the context of development studies, to the question: whose reality counts? (Chambers 1997; Davies 1994).

Considering that both the production and reception of information are mediated by social factors (whether they be cultural, political, spatial or organizational, as embodiments of interests and capabilities), it is not surprising that a great deal of research has also been conducted on the social aspects of information transfers. The benchmark of this work is the so-called 'knowledge-gap hypothesis', which sought to show (in the 1970s) that higher socio-economic status groups tend to assimilate new information faster than their lower-socio-economic group counterparts (see Tichenor et al., 1970; Hornik 1989).

It goes without saying that the medium (or channel) of information transfer is important (mass media or word of mouth), the complexity of information transferred is important (scientific findings or gossip about the neighbors) and the conditions under which information is transferred and received is important (at home, during wars and so on).

Mundy and Compton (1995) make an important distinction between exogenous (from outside) and indigenous (local or community-based) communication channels, and exogenous and indigenous knowledge. Indigenous communication channels have three important characteristics: they have developed locally, they are under local control and they use low levels of technology, and include folk media, indigenous organizations, deliberate instruction, unorganized channels (informal conversation) and observation. They argue that exogenous communication of exogenous information is the locus of most research in



development communication. Information and communication for development, they assert, usually begins with information carried from an outside source (such as a development agency), using non-indigenous channels (such as the mass media), which is then picked up and circulated through indigenous channels which become multipliers (whom, as we have seen, may be activated or not, depending on a range of factors), that will take over the dissemination process once the innovation (or new information) has proven superior. The point they are making of course is that an understanding of indigenous communication improves the chance of true participation by local people and outsiders in such efforts (see Francis 2002; Crossman and Devisch 2002). However, the process of proving 'superiority' remains a complex one, with matters of information and communication at their heart.

So, as the debates continue about appropriate approaches to development, and knowledge about sources of development failure expands, we need to ask ourselves 'where does appropriate information for development come from'?

This is a difficult question, because of the range of interpretative and cultural forms, unequal distribution of what we might call access technology (tools of communication), and a host of other variables which make communication what it is, immeasurable. In the context of thinking about development, a long-standing view holds that the government is/should be, the major source of development information (see Pool 1990). While early dominant paradigm adherents played down the state (and politics generally) in favor of a psychological and cultural approach, many adherents of a participatory approach are also skeptical of the state, offering instead a vision of a community-based citizenship,

occasionally slipping into a celebration of global social movements as *the* most desirable form of participation (Waisbord 2002). However, the reality is that national states and their governments make the rules, and if they act democratically, offer a range of actions with regards to communication and development, not least of which is the enablement of infrastructure. A state-centric approach is best exemplified by the following comment from the Report of the International Commission on Peace and Food, which suggests that,

A modest investment in new institutions to disseminate information can have an impact comparable to that of the information superhighways being heralded in the most industrially advanced nations- accelerating adoption of new activities, magnifying response to government programmes, and doubling the total developmental achievements of a country over the next five years (1994: 172).

While this sounds like the dominant paradigm, it is not about the mass media only, and highlights the role of the state in shaping the information landscape of a society. The state usually has a number of agencies through which it can disseminate information (a national broadcaster, state library services, extension officers, state controlled telecommunications corporations and so on). Perhaps it is the role of the state in providing a *policy platform* for information and communication strategies that establishes it as the most important actor when it comes to the issue of the information infrastructure of a society, and the rights of citizens to be both informed and have access to the means of communication. Beginning with the Constitution itself, which sets out the framework of rights, through the statutory bodies (like the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa) and the legislative program emanating from government ministry's, the state is able to erect an 'infostructure' within a society. For example, the legislation covering the creation of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (1994) remains *the* framework for broadcasting in South Africa today.

One such infostructure is the Multi-Purpose Community Centre (MPCC), alluded to in the discussion of the GCIS COMTASK Report. Since 1999, MPCCs have been rolled out (40 so far) throughout the country, with a planned 248 (one in each municipality in the country) by the year 2010 (GCIS 1999). These MPCCs are one-stop shops of service providers (government departments), including a telecentre. New information and communication technologies (ICT's) are seen as an essential aspect of the success of these centers, providing a national network infrastructure supporting a wide range of platforms for development (education and business development in particular) (Conradie 1998).

The following case study explores information issues in one locality that is served by an MPCC, although this particular center does not have a telecentre, and is not part of the network infrastructure by virtue of having no electricity.

### ***Case Study 7:*** **The Mbazwana Study**

In 2002 this author was part of a team invited to prepare a feasibility study on options for communication and marketing of the Rural Service System (RSS) and the establishment of an Information Bureau at Mbazwana in northern KwaZulu/Natal. The research was conducted with a view to evaluating one of the key objectives of the RSS: to act as a source of information which people can access, and therefore improve communication and understanding between service providers and the community. The RSS initiative is a partnership between the Department of Provincial and Local Government and donor

agencies, with the Mbazwana site acting as a pilot. The MPCC is the responsibility, however, of the GCIS.

The key objectives of this feasibility project were to:

- Determine the information needs of the Mbazwana community in terms of both government and non government services in the area;
- To establish a communication system, capacity or facility that will meet these information needs.

This project was undertaken in the context of a number of new developments, including the formative and settling-in phase of the new local government dispensation, and the establishment and high profile launch of the Multi Purposes Community Centre (MPCC) at Mbazwana in 2002.

The report is based on two structured focus group sessions with a convenience sample of community members and local organisational role players, as well as structured interviews with local service providers and the key principals with respect to information, namely the RSS and GCIS Government Information office based at Mbazwana.

This is a summary of issues which arose in the interviews and focus group discussions.

### **Service provider interviews**

Representatives of the following Service Providers were interviewed:

Home Affairs; Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (KZN); Department of Social Welfare; Station Commissioner: SAPS. The central findings of these interviews include:

- The respondents indicated a broad set of development needs for the people of the area: education, infrastructure, sanitation, jobs, water, electricity, health and houses.
- Three of the four respondents could not identify what people's information needs were. One indicated a need for information centres, which could assist the youth with career guidance, or for people entering the area.
- In response to questions about the service they provide, none mentioned information, only the service (certificates, grants, safety etc). The official from the KZN Department of Environmental Affairs mentioned the importance of workshops as an educational tool, the need to interact with different groups (inyangas) and the need to reduce the gap between the government and the people. The Department of Home Affairs and Welfare officials also mentioned the need to consult people about the services through the traditional authority.
- In response to questions about the MPCC/RSS, respondents indicated that it has brought services closer to the people, that it is assisting people by providing information, that it is avoiding duplication through sharing among service providers. The service providers located within the MPCC however raised numerous problems regarding the design of the MPCC and the extent to which it hampers service delivery or their part.
- In terms of information needs which are not being met, respondents indicated that

some people are not aware of their rights (benefits), that people are receiving information through the tribal authority, but that people who did not attend the meetings were not aware of these services (for example, Child grants). The Traditional Authority (Amakhosi) were mentioned a number of times as the main source of trusted information.

## **Focus group discussions**

### **Ward councillors**

- The service delivery problems identified included: inefficiencies at Home Affairs and other offices at the MPCC. The group also reflected on the problems raised in the community focus group around water supply, transport for crafters and the lack of a bus service; and the problems associated with funding applications for garden projects, which never get processed.
- The group indicated a close link and overlap between councillors and the Traditional Authority (implying that there was information sharing), but also hinted at a level of conflict between the two arenas. The group stressed the belief that people have in the traditional structures, and the trust that people have in information emanating from the traditional authority. The group emphasised the essential need for an amicable relationship between local council and traditional authority
- The group noted that information on services inevitably comes through the Traditional Authority as all service providers present themselves there before working in the area. The group spoke about the difficulties faced by councillors working in remote rural areas, which are inaccessible (poor roads and big distances).

They also noted that at the same time that Traditional Authorities were important, sometimes priority issues would have to await Traditional Authority consideration that would lead to delays.

- The group agreed that the centre was important in (bringing services closer, but indicated that need for existing services to be more efficient and for the introduction of additional activities (electricity payments for example). They indicated some concern with what they perceived as lack of consultation of the part of the GCIS.

### **Community members**

- The group identified problems as the provision of free water and access to electricity, which they had been promised, but which had not materialised. They also listed the promotion of garden projects (but no response to funding applications), craft transport (taxis refuse to carry crafts, and no buses), jobs (outsiders get work in the area), and with the MPCC itself, which does not have services available every day and sometimes involves long delays.
- The group indicated that they had raised the issue with the local council and ward councillors but had not seen these problems being resolved.
- The group suggested churches, halls, playgrounds and land as additional services they expected from government, and listed the services they were getting or had got from government as being pensions, child grants, UIF, a craft centre and market.
- The group indicated that they got most of their information from the Traditional Authority and emphasised the need for service providers to “pass through the Traditional Authority” so that people would get information. They listed the most

trustworthy source of information as being the Inkosi and the izinduna.

- In terms of information problems the group indicated that they sometimes discovered that they have not been informed about important issues by certain departments (drought relief for example). They saw the centre as useful but inefficient (making it expensive).

## **RSS and GCIS key informant interviews**

### **Government Communication and Information Service**

- The informant indicated that information needs depended on the target group, but also indicated an awareness of the need to link up with other actors. This interview revealed that there was a general problem of ignorance in communities, and he saw RSS/GCIS role as being to identify things for the community, and displaying information. He demonstrated an awareness of the imperative to reach out by discussing road shows.
- The informant listed the key problems facing the community as being infrastructure, and reiterated the issue of ignorance. He noted that people are invited to meetings, workshops and roadshows, but they often do not attend. He saw the necessity of attracting people with entertainment to ensure their participation, and then coupling this with information input. The informant saw information as being crucial to more than services, but also to attitudes (for example the lack of a voluntary ethos).
- The informant saw the need for collaborative communication strategies as in roadshows (with KZN Youth Council and Provincial Aids Action Unit for example).



- The informant saw the traditional structures as extremely important, both as a source of information and a site of information dissemination because of its familiarity and proximity.
- The informant saw the role of GCIS as a facilitator of service provision, and as an information provider. The role of GCIS was also to explain government policies and how they work. He added that it was also the GCIS role to provide the context so that when service providers come, people would already be familiar with the issues. He also defined GCIS role as being a monitoring one, and ensuring that service providers followed through on their promises. He noted that the GCIS acts as an information clearing house and works through liaison officers in each of the local councils. With respect to the MPCC, he saw the GCIS role at the MPCC as being one of monitoring the provision of services at the centre.
- In response to a question regarding how people currently use the MPCC as an information centre, the informant indicated that very few people come to the MPCC specifically looking for information other than that relating to the existing services at the MPCC. He noted that some teachers sought information (such as posters of the cabinet) for teaching purposes. He suggested the possibility of setting up an information display/stand in the front office of the GCIS offices. He also spoke about the status of the proposed telecentre, which was expected to provide a communication and technology role (fax, photocopy, e mail, internet access etc) to the service providers and the public. He indicated that the key learning coming out of the experience of the MPCC is that the centre was probably launched too early, before all the resources and systems were in place.

## **Rural Service Centre**

- The informant indicated that people got most of their information from the radio as few had television or could read newspapers. He referred to the widespread problem of general ignorance on the part of the community. He believed that the centre was most closely associated with the services provided by the Department of Home Affairs and Welfare.
- The informant saw the key distinction between GCIS and RSS as being that the former was conveying government information and the latter being focused around service integration (integrating budgets and planning).
- The informant saw the need for an information bureau to market the RSS, and to offer an information service on issues that are neglected at the moment (like getting a cell phone or starting a business).

While these interviews/discussions reveal much about the general development situation in Mbazwana, and touch on numerous information related matters, a more purposeful elaboration of some of these issues is appropriate.

## **Information needs within the community**

### **Limited understanding of the role of information**

There appears to be a fairly limited understanding of the role information can play in providing an environment conducive for development. This is evident both from the service providers and members of the Mbazwana community.

This research has barely scratched the surface of the problem: the relationship between information and people's actions in a context of relative isolation from national public affairs. There is strong thread running through the interviews and group discussions that indicate people are able to act on knowledge, but that such a knowledge base is narrow. The inability of many respondents to comment on their information needs, and the characterisation of people as 'ignorant' serves to highlight the position 'information' occupies in a hierarchy of needs and understandings.

Furthermore, there is no unanimity on the development needs/problems in the area, which can be immediately addressed. The problems are those associated with deep poverty: unemployment, lack of education, lack of basic infrastructure and lack of knowledge about how to respond to these problems. This points to the urgency of ensuring that the RSS is in fact sufficiently well resourced and institutionally positioned to function as a mechanism for integrating service delivery.

At the same time there are many problems raised which do point to communication and information based issues.

A key informant commented that people don't know what they need, "they say that they want halls and jobs, but they don't know about the need for self-employment and generating their own incomes." The informant identified a need for broad information provision in the area. He also spoke about people's resistance to attend meetings for information purposes

where there is no direct link with an employment opportunity. It is not clear what underlies this resistance, but it does make information provision difficult.

Another informant reiterated this point by saying that there are many things that people do not know. Most of their information comes from the radio.

It was difficult to elicit responses from the focus sessions in respect of those questions specifically probing information needs, problems or possibilities. An attempt was made to elicit responses which indicated the kinds of issues people had had some access to information about, be it through national media strategies, a knowledge of democracy and constitutional issues, or issues related to their direct rights to services available in the area.

Some indications of information needs can be drawn both from what people themselves said through the interview process, and what they did not say – the information which they do not currently have access to in any way.

Service providers were directly and indirectly asked about their perceptions of information needs in the area, and about their role in the provision of information. Most of them were unable to provide a direct response to either of these questions. They did, however detail many information related tasks and initiatives with which they are engaged in the area. This points to a lack of understanding by many of the officials about the role of information.

They seem to think about information as something that is separate from the work that they are doing.

The group of individual community members interviewed did not provide a list of issues about which they would like to receive more information. Other than receiving information on existing services, respondents showed little understanding, enthusiasm or expectation with respect to the possibilities of improved information and communication resources or how they might be better used or organized.

### **Understanding of institutional processes**

There appears to be a lack of understanding of the structures of government and the responsibilities of the various levels of government and other service providers. This implies a failure to grasp the way in which problems or issues can be taken up, and who has the power or responsibility to make decisions about services or development.

The community members often see their link to services and development as being through ward councillors. While this is desirable, it places a responsibility on individual councillors to provide comprehensive information about a range of issues which may or may not be related to the functions of local government, as well as to play a key education role within the communities. They are required to ensure that people have a full understanding of National policy related issues, how these policies affect people in Mbazwana, and what role they themselves can play. This is not always possible or effectively done.

For example: Minister Sigcau promised that the area would receive electricity. Electricity is not being provided as Eskom has said it does not electrify areas where solar panels exist.

Community members indicated that issues related to service delivery and development have

been raised with ward councillors at meetings. The group had no ideas about how to take up any of the issues themselves. There is a strong reliance on councillors providing access for them.

### **Understanding of Government policy**

There appears to be a lack of understanding about Government policy and service delivery issues. GCIS referred to a need for information about changes in laws relevant to people living in the area. One informant felt that this might be the responsibility of the SAPS. This is a debatable view given that law relates to policies of a range of levels of Government, and is merely enforced by the SAPS. A joint responsibility (of enforcers and other relevant Government agencies) for information about laws, their relevance, and rights and obligations of citizens would be a more feasible option.

For example, the community felt that they had been promised free water by the Government. Areas that now have water are required to pay for the service. Water committees exist which meet regularly and there seems to be an information flow through the Tribal Authority and the ward Councillors, yet community members are still articulating a concern about this issue. Either not enough information has been provided, or it has not been provided in such a way as to develop an understanding of Government policy and service delivery issues. Of course this may mean that the community is not happy about the particular arrangements and therefore raises questions about how those views can be articulated.

Further, when asked about additional information and services they would like access to, the community members were not able to answer. There is a narrow understanding of what

resources, services and rights based information they could have access to, and how this access could impact on their lives.

The Department of Social Welfare official felt that people needed to know about the benefits that they are entitled to. They have held meetings through the Tribal Authority about grants, and feel that the people who attended the meetings now know what they are entitled to.

The Home Affairs officials saw their role as one of service provision, and not information dissemination, yet they cited information problems as being a key obstacle to their work in the area. There have been problems with changes to tariffs and procedures about which people have not been informed. This causes tension between the officials working at Mbazwana and the people they serve. The officials did not see information provision about these changes to procedure as being their role to communicate. They felt that this was a responsibility of the Pretoria Head Office.

### **Understanding of development**

There is a lack of clarity about the role of development initiatives beyond direct service delivery. No mention was made of problems related to any issue beyond infrastructural issues like water and electricity, and gardening projects, which they knew about from the councillors and an existing land claim. It is significant that the group did not talk about health related issues, social and welfare issues, education or access to the economy.

Information and development education available in the area has a narrow base and is limited to issues around which authorities want people to engage, or where appropriate services are available (for example Home Affairs).

For example, gardening projects are seen as an initiative of the council and/or the Department of Agriculture and community members articulate their interest in them as access to funding. Councillors indicated that one of the main problems is duplication, which leads to a lack of clarity about roles. There does not seem to be a clear understanding of the role that community gardens could play in health and nutrition issues and providing food for their families. There is, as a result, no initiative taken by the community to start gardening projects themselves, as they see the problem being that councillors and officials have not come back to them with a report about funding.

### **Information provision mechanisms**

What was clear from the respondents is that the key axis for information management, dissemination and integration, currently in Mbazwana, is based principally on three institutions:

- The Tribal Authority
- The district and local council
- The Mbazwana Service Providers Forum which is co-coordinated by the RSS and GCIS.

At the same time there were a number of references to problems and weaknesses regarding co-ordination and linkages across the three institutions.

While much of the information flow occurs formally through these structures, this research has not been able to unpack the associational life of the community and the informal opinion leaders through whom information is mediated and circulated. It also does not reveal who



might be excluded from information flows on the basis of factors such as gender, age and location, nature of employment and education levels.

### **Information confidence**

While the MPCC itself does not seem to be playing a self-reflexive role as an information provider, the very fact that people see it as a useful resource provides opportunities for information dissemination. As the MPCC improves its service delivery and expands its services, people may begin to see beyond the 'Home Affairs' tag, and classify the site as an information source.

One obvious strategy in this regard is to ensure that the common experience of the centre be improved to a point where demonstrable information seeking is gathering momentum. Information confidence can only emerge in the conversations that people have with each other about their experiences. Even communication strategies such as workshops and roadshows require a level of generalised confidence in the authors of such initiatives. The tactic suggested by GCIS of using entertainment to draw people may only work in the short term, whereas building an interest in information itself is a stronger foundation.

### **Trustworthy information sources: Central role of the Zikhali/Mbila Tribal Authority in the existing communication system**

All the groups and service providers interviewed drew attention to the central role that the Traditional Authority played in the sourcing and dissemination of information regarding services, disputes, and community activities. It was identified as:

- The institution through which all service providers must liaise before they provide services in the area, although the study did not provide any real evidence of the nature of processes of information exchange;
- The institution through which service providers are able to access community members to provide information on new developments or to discuss problems relating to service provision which may or may not happen effectively across the whole community;
- An institution that was trusted by the community. A key informant drew attention to the fact that it was highly accessible (everyone is welcome) and that it met far more regularly than the local ward committees of the council (weekly as against quarterly). At the same time in a context of so-called 'ignorance', information accessible to the TA might itself not be complete, or really extend the 'narrow base' of knowledge.

The Traditional Authority structures are consistently identified as trustworthy. However, simply because they are known, or are familiar, does not mean that the information is always appropriate. As a conduit for service providers to disseminate information they are important, but this relies on service providers consistently working consciously to improve the level of information provision through this mechanism.

As, and when, ward councillors (or even a few dedicated individuals) begin to act in such a way as to open alternative avenues of problem solving, then this trust may emerge in other contexts. This is true of the MPCC itself, incorporating the GCIS purpose of 'translating' policy into useable knowledge, and the RSS purpose of ensuring a co-ordinated and

responsive service provider cohort. The critical issue is that the MPCC is seen as a site of success.

This is not to say that one trustworthy source of information is replaced by another, but that people come to see different information sites as fulfilling different needs. One should guard against communication campaigns designed to raise the profile of sources which cannot meet the realistic expectations of the people.

The question of rights education cannot be lost in this discussion, and the MPCC has an important role to play in the general, and targeted, provision of people-centred ideas (to the youth, to women, the unemployed and so on). These initiatives should happen on a regular basis at the MPCC itself, and not always away from the centre. People will be caught up in these events as they transact with the service providers. These kinds of activities are stimuli, and do not necessarily need the formality of meetings and workshops.

### **Information leadership**

At present, information leadership is exercised by those in authority (the TA, GCIS, councillors), which creates opportunities and constraints. It means that in certain situations, information can be disseminated rapidly by virtue of the power invested in the source. It also means that information can be managed in partisan ways. Information leadership needs to be shared across the society: church groups, youth, cultural groups, and women should be encouraged to find ways of expressing their knowledge and understandings of their lives and circumstances. Centralised information sources often prevent the mixing of people in such a way as to share information with each other. Structured visits by people from other areas,

and informal gatherings (if they are possible) are important in breaking cycles of information dependency and encourage sharing of ideas.

### **Role of the MPCC/RCC**

The focus groups and interviews all confirmed that the establishment of the MPCC/RSS node had brought benefits to the local community by providing services significantly closer to the people, thereby reducing travel and costs significantly.

However there were major concerns from both community clients (focus groups), and the service providers themselves, regarding the quality of the services and the manner in which these services were being provided.

These problems included:

- The fact that a number of service providers (Home Affairs, Labour) do not provide a routine service, and that the service is infrequent. This might also be linked to a further concern about the appointment of people from outside of Mbazwana to posts within the offices of the various service providers.
- The service provider offices are operating more as part-time satellites than fully fledged devolved services, and thus have not organized their delivery systems to provide a complete service. The lack of electricity at the centre (despite its official opening three months previously) and the lack of computer connectivity means that these services are not integrated into the service mainstream of their respective agencies. This leads to lengthy delays, frustrations and increases costs to clients

through repeat visits (as much as R100 per visit from more outlying areas of the service area).

- There are design problems with the actual structure of the MPCC with respect to customer reception and service provider working space. Two service provider informants (Home Affairs and Welfare) indicated that the office space was wholly unsuitable for their service requirements. Furthermore there is a lack of clarity regarding core accountability for the centre itself and the status of the operation and maintenance plan for the centre.

All the above problems have been exacerbated by the fact that the MPCC was given a high profile launch in March 2002 by two senior Ministers of the National Cabinet where certain expectations were raised regarding the nature of the services the community could expect from the centre. The gap between expectation and delivery has led to a level of demoralization on the part of staff and increased frustration on the part of community members and role players within the council and tribal authority.

It is clear that the Centre does play a role as an information source, but acts more as a place where pre-existing information (or knowledge) can be acted upon. It does not seem to be the case that many people seek information at the centre. What they seek is a resolution to a knowledge induced need or desire. The central problem is that many people in the area do not know that they do not know. To ask these people what their information needs are is like asking someone if they are colour blind.

### **Perceived role of GCIS/RSS**

The role of GCIS and RSS in terms of the integration of service delivery and information services is not clearly understood by most community and local organizational informants.

The community group focus sessions indicated that the participants did not know about GCIS or its role. The institutional focus session, while reflecting some knowledge of its role (*“to communicate information about local, provincial and national government and what government departments were doing...”*), voiced their concerns about the efficiency of the office and the level of consultation with the local council.

The role of the RSS, and its manager, was seen by most informants as specifically *“managing the centre and service provision at the centre”*, although a number of respondents referred to additional roles including:

- Responsibility for disseminating information to the council and community;
- Co-coordinating the Mbazwana Service Providers Forum;
- Integrating Service Provision.

### **Role of the Service Providers Forum in information issues**

While not much was said about the existing role of the Service Providers Forum in information provision, there are possibilities for improving information flow within the area through the SPF structure. It is an important structure for talking about information, and community education issues, sharing problems, possible mechanisms, joint projects and mobilizing sources for information dissemination.

## **Conclusion**

The resonances with earlier work (reported in Chapter 2) are apparent, although in this case we have been drawn into a discussion of more specific aspects of information in relation to service delivery, and to the role of the state.

Considering that the centre approach is strongly backed, internationally, by the World Bank and the International Telecommunications Union, it is remarkable that so little has been published about MPCCs, and even less about their impact (Snyman 2002). Judging by the kinds of problems relating to information issues in developing contexts such as Mbazwana, the surface has barely been scratched. It has been argued that situations, like Mbazwana, should be characterized as information poverty (Chowdhury 2000) because people have inadequate ownership of, or control over assets (both tangible and intangible). Poor people can be identified, in fact, by their lack of literacy and lack of access to accurate information.

Essentially there are two responses to this (at any particular local level, rather than at an international level): the leapfrogging approach, through increased access to ICT's (Singh 2000) or the strengthening of information infrastructure (exogenous and endogenous) which reduces isolation and builds confidence (Heeks 1999; O'Farrell 2000). With this crude distinction in mind, let us proceed to a discussion about ICT's in the context of development.

## **Of telecentres and networks**

In the South African context, the greatest challenge to a participatory communication approach lies in the rapid elevation of new communications and information technologies (ICT's) to a status well beyond their demonstrable effectiveness in addressing information poverty. There is no denying the significance of these new technologies in the economic infrastructure of the country, and their undoubted contribution to economic development, but they have installed themselves in a society which has the following characteristics:

- High levels of poverty for the majority of the population;
- High levels of illiteracy;
- An unfolding policy process which is part driven by re-shaping a society based on legislative exclusion, and part driven by the demands of a global economic environment;
- An as yet 'immature' state, whose relationship with society continues to emerge unevenly;
- A culturally diverse range of groupings, largely bounded by spatial differentiation as a result of the program of 'separate development'.

While considerations of 'e-readiness' are of growing concern worldwide, the issue of dovetailing programs (and evaluations) of 'e-readiness' platforms with the discourse and practice of participatory communication for social change has not really produced a body of knowledge upon which we can build a new synthesis. The question then is – how do we locate new, ICT driven development initiatives on the continuum of communication in/for



development? The published consensus is that there has been a largely top-down approach (Benjamin 2002; Gillwald 2002).

However, the transition to democracy in South Africa has built significant 'bottom-up' approaches into the initial re-ordering process: constructing a new constitution; creating a range of independent 'watchdog' bodies in the fields of human rights, freedom of expression, democratic processes etc; and privileging the voices of the emerging 'free' collectivities (such as the unions and civic organizations).

In fact, the emerging 'stakeholder' model of decision-making has permeated the society as a foundational discourse of participation (see Braman 2001). This real development in terms of a public consciousness may still form the bedrock of expectations at the grassroots, and provide a source of tension as such expectations fail to materialize in domains which are more heavily contested (for example, between new forms of local governance and traditional authorities).

In the field of communications, the distance between the control of the airwaves by political fiat and the 'people' has been displaced by the creation of an environment which was (and partially remains) an open terrain, in which a diverse range of voices were and are, articulated. The period post 1994 certainly promised an era of renewed engagement with the processes whereby 'participation' could become a meaningful reality. Sadly, this process has not lived up to expectations in all sectors of the communications domain. The decline of the alternative, community-based media and the targeting of the old liberal press are not

highlights of a new progressive era in constructing an open media environment (Duncan 2002). Furthermore, the decentralization approach characteristic of a new governance model, which insists upon the significance of communication in realizing such goals, has not been explored in any detail, although the resonance with the project of 'participation through communication' is obvious.

However, notwithstanding debates and differing assessments of the field of media and communications in terms of their true participatory potential, and bottom-up possibilities, there is no doubt that progress has been made. Guy Berger (1999; 2001) has defended the transformation in the South African communications and media fields on the basis of their contribution to democratization, de-racialisation and black empowerment, in the face of criticisms leveled at the process of transformation that it has served to consolidate class divisions (see Boloka and Krabill 2000).

Can the same be said of the field of ICT's in the context of development? This is still broadly a sector within the field of communications, and as the merging of the two regulatory bodies (SATRA and the IBA) attests, is seen as such. Convergence is a new policy domain (Van Audenhove 1999; Mansell and Wehn 1998). The new era of digitalized information and its technological platforms are surely still within the purview of any discussion of communication, participation and development.

## **The institutional environment**

This is not the place to go into a full review of all policy initiatives associated with new information and communication technologies (see Horwitz 1997; Gillwald 2002). Suffice to endorse the views contained in James (2001), where it is argued:

- Policy has suffered from a lack of resources for appropriate implementation (thus asking the question as to its success), and “ far from sufficient attention has been paid to the lack of institutional capacity” (2001: 87);
- A weak and ineffective regulator which has not been able to fulfill certain functions “essential to the successful realization of policy objectives” (2001:88);
- The skills base in ICT policy, in South Africa (and the subregion) is “extremely low”, and the lack of human resources in ICT’s in government is partially explained by the high remuneration offered in the private sector (2001: 89);
- Information and research on the working of the telecommunications sector is not readily available in the public domain, nor are certain areas well understood (for example, the use of ICT’s, especially by disadvantaged groups), and this lack of good data to establish benchmarks makes effective monitoring extremely difficult (2001: 89).

At the same time as we become aware of the institutional shortcomings with regard to ICT’s, the chorus of voices supporting the use of ICT’s for a ‘great leap forward’ becomes ever louder. The plethora of initiatives around the Digital Divide, and the invocation of a

new form of global society, the Information Society, or Knowledge society, combine to a crescendo culminating in views such as those expressed by Chisenga, who argues, “Unless appropriate measures are taken, most people will run the risk of being left out of the benefits of the information society” (2001: 3). These calls are not simply academic in origin, but reflect a dominant discourse at the international level (CTO 2001).

The central thrust towards mobilizing ICT’s for **development**, as a popular discourse of redressing the past, empowerment and capacity building, has been through the debate about universal service, and the practical implementation of broadening connectivity (Horwitz 1997). This debate initially led to provisions in the Telecommunications Act (1997) for the creation of the Universal Service Agency (USA) whose task it would be to establish a telecentre movement in South Africa (funded through statutory transfers from telecommunications operators). While it became clear that there were major shortcomings in the framework of telecentre rollout, the USA did begin setting up pilot tele-centres and at last count (end 2000) was instrumental (along with a range of partners, donor agencies included) in developing 65 centres with varying degrees of success (Benjamin 2002: 32).

Once again, it is possible to identify a range of institutional problems with the USA telecentre initiative (James 2001: 79; Benjamin 2002), including:

- The USA suffered from serious human resource constraints;
- Reporting lines were confused;
- Problems were encountered with collecting funds from operators and the Treasury;

- A pilot scheme was broadened into a full rollout program without the necessary budget or management skills in place.

The problems with the USA initiative go deeper, however, reflecting confusion at a policy level (around the meaning of universal service and access; the implications of cellular telephony) which has led Benjamin to comment that, “unintentionally the USA telecentre programme created dependency and stifled local adaptation and ownership” and that “top down planning is very unlikely to achieve bottom up development” (2002: 37). Furthermore, the USA became mired in scandal, which reduced its credibility and affectivity. For example, the Business Day reported that, “the auditor-general found in a qualified audit for the 1998/99 financial year, tabled in Parliament, that the agency did not have any internal policies regarding financial management and internal controls” (Business Day 18/9/2000).

From an institutional perspective then, van Audenhove’s (1999) comments seem to be appropriate:

Put rather simply, South Africa’s political leaders share the vision that ICT’s can help to overcome some of the legacies of Apartheid. Especially in the area of services, ICT’s are identified as facilitators in the restructuring of sectors and as the means of delivering services not readily available, through tele-education, tele-health, tele-government etc. This vision is based on a central belief in the possibilities of ICT’s for social change. But this vision is not set out in a formal policy document, nor is there a strategic policy plan to arrive at the information society.

In a more general comment on the wide-ranging debate around ICT's and their role in development, Neil Butcher (2001) suggests that the mobilization of new information and communication technologies in the South African context has been seen by some as a panacea to our social problems, primarily in the fields of education and poverty. While we have heard the arguments put forward by Butcher before (see Mansell and Wehn 1998), he is at pains to ground his skepticism in a careful reading of the situation 'on the ground'; and suggests that the following characteristics of many ICT initiatives should caution us to their likely impact:

- Many initiatives are in their infancy, with more emphasis on frameworks and planning, than on the real outcomes;
- Many projects set unrealistic targets, which reflects their 'newness';
- Too many projects rely on 'soft funding', rendering their long term effectiveness fragile;
- Too many projects are reliant on the energies of committed individuals;
- Too many projects are weighed down by discussion and wasted resources;
- Too many projects try and impose 'foreign' solutions on local problems.

He suggests that these problems indicate that there is a real risk "that we are repeating many of the mistakes that have been made in such initiatives" (Butcher 2001: 77). Of central importance to Butcher's views are the forms of organization which are often entrusted with carrying new initiatives through, and the difficulties associated with building sustainable community structures.

In the same vein, it is worth noting that the authoritative *Information and Communication Technologies in the Commonwealth Report* prepared by the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization (2001) bemoans the lack of data available on the so-called 'digital divide', particularly as it is measured within a country. It suggests that data about telecommunications infrastructure and regulatory environments urgently need to be supplemented with information about **who** is making use of existing access, **how** and for **what purpose(s)**. In particular, attention should be paid to:

- users of telecommunications in newly served rural areas;
- women;
- socially disadvantaged groups;
- professional groups such as health workers and teachers;
- and newly formed small businesses.

While the Report points to the urgency of establishing an Information Society Index, a crucial set of indicators of ICT preparedness or readiness would assist policymaking, and should focus on human capacity/resources rather than on the technical or regulatory dimensions. Such an index would include factors such as overall literacy and numeracy rates, educational attainment and opportunities for IT training. This perspective is based on three central findings:

- internet usage is disproportionately high among high income groups in all societies;
- internet use rises with levels of educational attainment (and they quote the World Bank which reports that 98% of Zimbabwean, and 87% of Ethiopian internet users surveyed have university degrees);

- men are more likely to use the internet than women (and they quote the ILO which reports that the proportion of male users in Ethiopia and Senegal is 86% and 83% respectively).

However, these problems can be viewed from another perspective. A good example would be the work of Ruth Ochieng and Jenny Radloff (2001) on the significance of the Internet for women in Africa. While they do not avoid many of the pressing problems facing women in Africa, their perspective stresses the potential value of ICT's for women, particularly the possibilities inherent in the many networks and listservs that have emerged over the past few years. Theirs is a vision of hope and emancipation, built around the visible breaking of silence. While gender is an important unifying identity, and describes a form of information exclusion, the question remains as to the likely success of small initiatives that potentially reconfigure social relations (particularly in the countryside).

In the light of the above, what lessons can be shared from the grassroots? We know that South Africa has some way to go before an integrated information and communication strategy is developed, and that learning will probably only effect the functioning of telecentres (and other similar initiatives) on a case by case basis. It is not with a view to contributing to this process that a review of certain cases is undertaken, but with an understanding that case studies provide a *phronetic* framework for social scientific endeavor: that is, as Flyvbjerg (2001) has argued, our concerns should be less with searching for the general principles and explanations of social affairs than with the practical rationalities that underpin action.



## *Case Study 8:*

### **Telecentre at Bhamshela**

Bhamshela is a small town about 90 kms east of Pietermaritzburg, in an area called Ozwathini. It comprises a few shops, a school and a couple of government buildings, which service a scattered rural population (approx 20000) in what used to be a non-independent homeland (Kwa-Zulu). Along with many similar settlements, it has little formal employment, few NGOs and bears the scars of political conflict in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The normal process of establishing a telecentre took the form of a call for expressions of interest from the USA to which communities responded by the formation of an organization to take the initiative forward. In the case of Bhamshela, the telecentre was owned by two community groups, the Bhamshela Arts and Culture Group, and the Open Window Network (a Cape Town based NGO with a chapter in Bhamshela). A Management Board was established, comprising a local politician, an induna (a traditional authority figure) and members of the community groups.

The actual establishment of the telecentre involved a contract signed between the Board and the USA, and the construction of a building by the Department of Public Works (although the land was purchased by the community groups). The centre was launched in 1998. While there is some confusion over the relationship with the telephone utility, Telkom, apparently the USA itself was responsible for this contract as well (5 lines). The closure of the centre in

late 2001 owing to the disconnection of the phone lines by Telkom highlighted this confusion as an unpaid amount of R70 000 led Telkom to take action.

This telecentre has been categorized as 'successful' in a number of studies (Benjamin and Stavrou 2000 Project; Espitia 2001), although, as mentioned above, it is currently closed and waiting relocation to a newly constructed Multi-Purpose Community Centre (MPCC) to be managed by the Government Communication and Information Service. The idea of success is more related to questions of sustainability and profitability than it is to questions around information exchange, particularly in some of the recent research (Espitia 2001; Benjamin 2002). However, the management staff at the Bhamshela telecentre themselves, believed, up until the middle of 2001, that it was a successful centre.

Nevertheless, there are a number of problems that this telecentre faced, many of which are endemic to the telecentre phenomenon, as identified in the Telecentre 2000 Report (Benjamin and Stavrou 2000) and the Community ICT Survey (Espitia 2001):

- The equipment at the centre, apart from the phones, was under-utilized from the start;
- The facilities were not seen as relevant to the general population of the area whose education levels are low;
- The costs of services are relatively high in a context of high unemployment, which meant that telephone revenue was the mainstay of the centre;

- Training of centre staff (which was conducted by the USA) was inadequate, and staff turnover contributed to a lack of skills (particularly as far as computers were concerned)
- Insufficient attention was paid to the ‘natural allies’ of the centre, learners and business people;
- No serious monitoring or evaluation of the impact of the centre was ever undertaken;
- No planning for technical problems and their solution was ever undertaken, resulting in long periods when key technologies were unavailable (for example, the printer and the fax machine);
- Little effort was made to integrate the centre services with other initiatives (notwithstanding discussion of a resource centre and library);

In effect, this telecentre was a phone shop with idle computers, few linkages to the local community and further afield, without a clear sense of its information role in the broader community, and an underdeveloped skills node in a context of dire need and disadvantage. These kinds of problems account for the failure of about half of the tele-centres surveyed in late 2000 (Benjamin 2002: 33).

Throughout a long period of association with the telecentre (through the two managers), and a number of structured attempts to gauge community understandings of the role the centre could and did play, it has become obvious that:

- The discursive distance between the underlying ‘telecentre as information society development panacea’ and the popular consciousness of ordinary community

members was extremely wide. The generally held rhetoric of the power of computers to enable information transfers for resolving development problems, particularly amongst the youth and scholars, was depressingly unsupported by the reality of the centre's activities.

- The initial interest and enthusiasm in the local Arts and Culture Group, upon which the centre was originally founded, was dissipated into factionalism based on favoritism in terms of part-time employment. In fact, the promise of the centre as a location for the general strengthening of civil society turned into a general disempowerment, as a number of organizations, whose general functioning deteriorated as a result of unfulfilled expectations (of training and general administrative capabilities), went into decline.
- For all that the two centre managers were dedicated and resourceful, and did indeed manage the centre in such a way as to ensure its survival for over three years, there was little progression towards the ideal 'infomediary' so often spoken about in the literature as an essential aspect of ICT use in a developing context (See Heeks 1999; Benjamin 2001). Nor was there a substantial learning network created (now recognized by the new approach to MPCCs) although some efforts at creating such a network were driven by the USA itself.
- It became apparent that the telecentre, while making life easier for many community members (through telephonic contact with relatives, phoning in case of emergencies, faxing CV's and typing notices when possible), had no real impact on the existing sources and locations of important information. Older people only talk about the

traditional authorities when discussing information sources that are trustworthy and of relevance to day-to-day life in the community. Even more significant, perhaps, is that the research process undertaken by the Telecentre 2000 (Benjamin and Stavrou 2000) study, making partial use of a PRA methodology, failed to ask community members where their local information came from, whose interests this source served and who was excluded in this information circuit.

These kinds of problems are very different from the general problems usually identified with the failure of tele-centres (above), although aspects of these issues are well recognized in the literature. One of the most keenly observed problems relates to the lack of locally contextualized information, and its corollary, technological determinism or technological fetishism.

The critique of technological determinism, which is occasionally heard, is still a very general one, which is essentially incapable of explaining why some tele-centres have experienced some success. Gillwald (2001: 180) has suggested that, “behind many of the policies and implementation strategies in South Africa has been....technological fetishism”, and that “laudable as these intentions are, millions of rands have been spent fruitlessly on getting technology into tele-centres, multipurpose community centres and the like, without any attempt to contextualize their usage”.

What happened to a once useful centre which provided a much needed service, even if it did not really impact on the knowledge base of the community? The technical problems, and other externalities, as Stavrou (2001) calls them (training, networking and so on) do go some way to answering this question. However the central element remains the ‘will’ to make it

work in spite of USA bungling and weak capacity. Could it be that a general passivity prevailed, or a complete lack of accountability? These are questions that anyone would be hard pressed to answer through surveys, observations and data analysis. Ostensibly, everyone was (is) in favor of such an initiative. Where do we turn to find these answers?

Some aspects may become clearer if we turn now to another, quite different initiative, also founded on the mobilization of ICT's for development.

### ***Case Study 9:*** **The Msunduzi Community Network**

This project, a partnership between the Greater Edendale Environmental Network (GREEN) and the Institute of Natural Resources (INR), was implemented in Pietermaritzburg over a period of 18 months between the beginning of 1998 and mid-1999. It was initially called The Msunduzi River Catchment Community Based Environment and Development Information and Communication Network.

The project grew out of a growing perception that environmental and developmental initiatives in and around Pietermaritzburg would be significantly strengthened by enhancing the information and communication capabilities of the community based organizations associated with GREEN.

The objectives of the project centered on *improving* access to information (for organizations and community's), decision making and action responses through the establishment of functional 'hubs' equipped with ICT's (the network).

In particular, the project specified the following objectives as requirements:

- Establishing GREEN as a central node for the network;
- Expanding the network from three to eight hubs;
- Ensuring the requisite training for hubs to function effectively;
- Endeavor to use the network to the advantage of the community at large (through partnerships with formal and informal stakeholders and 'representatives')
- Developing an effective community-based electronic 'information and communication' model.

The project has been supported by the ACACIA program within the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), a program promoting the use of information and communication technologies for development. The project has located itself within the ACACIA program approach which seeks to test particular methodologies or approaches which themselves feed into a search for national strategies.

A qualitative approach to assessing the outputs and impact of the project was adopted. Information gathering was undertaken through face-to-face interviews (usually in groups), observation, and a study of documents made available on request.

In terms of process, the interviews began with the staff of GREEN itself, then with INR, and then with the hubs. Further meetings with GREEN and INR followed, with another round of visits to the hubs. Stakeholders were contacted along the way as their connection to the project became apparent. Independently, interviews took place with GREEN and INR staff around training and the communication aspects of the project (the website and the newsletters). Very little documentary evidence from the hub organizations has been forthcoming, although the reports compiled by GREEN itself have been valuable, and attest to a reasonable flow of information amongst participants, and to the veracity of the information gathered in other ways.

As a network of organizations, GREEN exists as a permanent secretariat, with numerous community-based affiliates. Prior to the project under review, it was simply a group of dedicated volunteers who performed an integrating function across the broad field of environmental groups and issues. It is only when the project started that any real institutional framework was created. Throughout its existence, GREEN has been under the direction of Sandile Ndawonde, who became the project manager of Phase 1, with the INR.

By its very nature then, the project was the beginning of a process of consolidation and change in the nature of both GREEN itself, and the organizations with which it sought to develop the project. The project is thus less the creation of a network, than the institutionalization of a set of relationships which had existed for some time, and which were born of voluntary activism in the field of environmental problems facing the Black communities in and around Pietermaritzburg.



GREEN has had to play a difficult role: not only has it the responsibility of ensuring an organizationally coherent set of practices (which implies authority), but it has also been responsible for the social economy of the network: continuing the relationship building begun before the project began, and maintaining good human relations amongst participants (when in reality, it had no authority).

The INR on the other hand, is a professional research and facilitation organization, and owes its existence to securing contracts in the field of development. While a number of INR staff have been involved in the project, Duncan Hay has been the central figure. His overall impression of the start up period is of institution building across the network (administrative systems, computer skilling, report/proposal writing and so on). His ability to marshal the training expertise and provide institutional support through his own network of contacts and service providers is reflected in his understanding of the significant achievements of this phase.

Looking at the network of hubs provides us with a framework with which to consider the social economy of the network. While Phase 1 was the implementation of an electronic network, this was built on informal contacts which were molded into a form of organization, not in a formal sense, with a range of organizational requirements for functioning: administration, financial management, learning (through training) and the sharing of information through the use of the technology. This required a form of surveillance and

monitoring whose success was reliant on the informal 'togetherness' of a group of individuals.

Transforming a group of activists into a structure without rules is a complicated process, and one which remains in process today. The role of INR in this process has been negligible, by virtue of the fact that Duncan Hay acted as a facilitator in bringing the project into existence, but played no role in its social economy. The fact is, not all the hubs are in the hands of those initially part of the project, and GREEN has had to maintain an organization without rules at the same time as the informal network has changed. The Sobantu Environmental Desk, the Woodlands Environmental Forum and the Willowfontein Youth Development Forum have retained people who were part of the initial project, but the Vulindlela and Georgetown hubs are now 'manned' by new recruits to their own respective organizations.

The GREEN network is central to the broader network of CBOs and NGOs in Pietermaritzburg encompassing as it does the environmental groups (such as the Environmental Justice Networking Forum, Earthlife and the Agenda 21 group) and others, such as HIV/AIDS groups. Brian Bassett, the City Planner views GREEN as one of the most important groups 'interfacing with the community', and 'one of the most trustworthy groups in the PMB area'.

All the hubs are situated in and around Pietermaritzburg, in poor communities with little access to organizational resources (conduits for action). All the hubs have had to deal with the question of how best to balance the use of technology (organizational, or profit making,

from CV's, typing and printing) and think through the implications of these choices. The central question facing hubs today is how best to translate the skills and experience developed organizationally through their own activities and those associated with the start up period into projects which will sustain the organizations into the future.

Looking at the various hubs of the network provides us with a sense of the constraints and opportunities that characterize the initiative.

### **Sobantu**

The Sobantu hub is managed by the Sobantu Environmental Desk (SED), in a smallish African area (close to town) with a long history of political activism. This is the hub that was already computerized before start up, on the basis of the relationship that existed between SED and INR prior to 1998. The hub has been an integral part of the network (both informal and formal) for some time, and Siphos is now an employee of GREEN. The SED itself is a fairly busy organization (+/- 40 volunteers) and has been active in a number of ways: recycling/bottle collection (on the basis of which they received a grant in mid-2000 from LIFE), environmental awareness in schools, developing a People's Park, clean-up campaigns (for which they have received small grants from the Msunduzi Council), community workshops etc. It is housed in a secure office in Sobantu which is provided free by the Msunduzi Council.

The organization has at least 10 members who are able to use the computer, and the technology is seen as being an important infrastructure for the organization, both in terms of accessing information and communicating with others on the network, but also as a potential

source of income. Some CV's are done, and an application has been sent to the Universal Service Agency to set up a mini telecentre

Some of the problems faced by the hub include: a situation in which a member of the Development Committee wanted to assume control of the facility (but resolved); dependence on the support of the local councilor for maintaining the space (and expanding it); competing demands of the community (other organizations) and their own work.

From a network point of view, the links remain solid, but these are primarily face-to-face and telephonic. The hub (and the organization itself) is firmly part of the social economy of the network. Like all the organizations involved in the project, the Desk worries about money, and sustainability.

### **Woodlands**

This hub is operated by the Woodlands Environmental Action Desk, and is housed in the Community Support Centre which also acts as a base for other activities. This is the only hub operating in a non-African area. Organizationally, it has never been strong, with a succession of volunteers, and projects, which have never really coalesced. At present there are a number of projects in the pipeline (including a Safe Community Project; a Job and Economic Empowerment Program; a Youth Desk; Women in Action) and ongoing Community Development Seminars. No independently funded projects are operational. The hub is very much part of the social economy of the network, with strong links to GREEN (who are supporting an ongoing proposal writing effort with the hub). There is a measure of frustration at the lack of community interest and participation.

### **Willowfontein**

The Willowfontein hub is operated by the Willowfontein Youth Development Forum, and is located in a secure building on the premises of an old school in the semi rural Edendale valley. It is an area with a high level of political mobilization, and the Youth Forum is an integral part of this. This group is energetic and outward looking, trying to establish a library close to the centre, and engaging in a range of other community based activities.

Independent support has been generated through a Land Care Project, funded by the Department of Agriculture.

### **Georgetown**

The Georgetown hub is operated by the Edendale YMCA and is located in the new Georgetown library building where the Council provides free office space. This hub was originally located elsewhere, but after a burglary found the present accommodation.

The hub operators are young and are presently employed as field assistants on a Land Care Project which is supported by the Department of Agriculture.

### **Vulindlela**

This hub is presently housed in a private dwelling in a semi-rural area about 40 minutes outside Pietermaritzburg in a politically contested area. The driving force behind the hub has been an elderly community activist involved in a range of activities with local women (collectively known as the Khanyani Agricultural Project). The hub has relocated once, and

did have difficulty re-connecting with the network until a wireless telephone line was installed recently.

### **Establishing GREEN as a central node of the network**

It is only possible to examine this issue retrospectively, through perceptions from participants, and observation of the organization as it exists today.

Notwithstanding the over reliance on IDRC funding (an issue which effected the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2), GREEN now exists as a secure central node of a network of electronically connected hubs. It has well-situated, secure and convivial premises; a dedicated staff of three people; appropriate management, financial and administrative systems; and appropriate technological support.

Furthermore, GREEN has consolidated itself as the pre-eminent NGO in the environmental arena (with the decline of Earthlife and EJNF).

### **Expanding the network into a series of computer equipped, and connected, hubs**

At present there are five hubs, all of which have been in existence since the beginning of the project (albeit under different circumstances), located in Woodlands, Vulindlela,

Willowfontein, Sobantu and Georgetown. These hubs have the following characteristics:

- All have secure and stable premises with functioning network capability;
- All have received appropriate training with regard to communicating electronically, and maintaining the infrastructure of the organization;

- All but one have solid organizational underpinning;
- All but one act as the offices of organizations which have secured their own funding;
- All play an active role in maintaining the organizational network that is GREEN.

### **Ensuring that hubs are able to function effectively**

While this objective refers primarily to the necessary training required for successful electronic networking (which has been achieved), it raises the more important question regarding the organizational efficacy of the hub, in the light of the overarching commitment to contributing to development and environmental awareness/action.

Without being able to fully evaluate each and every project undertaken by the hub host, it is not that clear whether this aim has been achieved

### **Endeavor to use the network to the advantage of the community at large (through partnerships with formal and informal stakeholders and representatives)**

There are two central questions that arise when we attempt to evaluate this objective.

First, to assess the extent to which the hub host organization itself has attempted to use the network, which is an organizational and technical question. As can be seen in the section below on the website component of the network, the website per se did not displace more traditional forms of communication across the hub organizations, but did contribute to the

identity of the network, and provided the foundation for the receipt of resources (such as training and financial support for connections from GREEN and INR) which provided the necessary infrastructure for other projects. However, with limited funds, the hub hosts were, during the duration of Phase 1, encouraged to carry their own connectivity costs (after a number of hubs ran up large telephone bills).

Secondly, to assess the impact of the hub host organizations on the community at large. This has been a difficult question to answer, as the evaluation has not really provided a platform for analyzing their activities in any detail. However, we did not encounter any perceptions amongst stakeholders that suggest hub host organizations were doing anything but their best. The problem lies in the long linkage chains emanating from the hub host organization. For example, the Georgetown hub hosts are running a Land Care project through the Department of Agriculture involving a group of women. None of these women can be thought of as direct beneficiaries of a communication and information network, although they are clearly benefiting from the linkages with Phase 1 (inasmuch as the Land Care project proposals have been facilitated by INR).

In terms of the stakeholders, the name given generally to those people or organizations worked with on a regular basis, the emphasis has been on officials within local government structures and service providers. All the individuals contacted within organizations, such as Local Council officials (planning, waste management etc), Parks Board officials and Umgeni Water attests to the important role played by GREEN and hub organizations.



## **Developing an effective community-based electronic ‘information and communication’ model**

It is quite clear that there is nothing like a community information network established.

There is no right of access ‘off the street’ to electronic communication systems, and only marginal access for individuals to access information from the Internet for example.

### **Overview of external communication tools**

The project had as some of its key specific objectives:

- Representatives of participating organisations transferring their understanding of environment and development issues to the broader community.
- Information on environment and development issues in the Msunduzi River catchment consolidated, accessible and understandable to communities.
- Formulated, tested and validated electronic information and communication model that focuses on community groups and can be applied at local and regional level and that informs a national strategy.

The project used a number of methods to transfer information. Two of the methods used for both internal and external communication and information sharing were the development of a website and the production and distribution of newsletters.

The project successfully managed to put in place both these communication tools during Phase 1, in line with their planned activities and goals.

The extent to which these communication tools assisted in effectively meeting specific objectives of the project is less clear. The key problem that is being recognised and articulated by the project co-ordinators when reflecting on Phase 1, is around the purpose of information sharing. The following questions were not effectively answered at the outset:

- What kind of information needs to be shared?
- Who does particular information need to be shared with?
- What is the purpose of sharing that information with a particular target group?
- What method would be most appropriate for sharing specific information, with a specific group, for a specific purpose?

The project did share information about its work, about environmental and development issues and about networking with a range of target audiences through a range of methods, yet the potential of each method was not fully utilised. The result of this has been that these methods have not been effectively reviewed, developed and restructured into more appropriate tools in the later Phases of the project. It has been difficult for the project to do this as the reason for each method used having limited effect, was not immediately clear.

### **The Website as a communication tool**

The development of a website, or cluster of websites, for the project was a fundamental part of Phase 1. By the end of the project a website at [www.duzi.co.za](http://www.duzi.co.za) had been created which included linked pages of each of the 5 operational hubs, a project information page, and links to the partner organisation's websites.

This was a substantial achievement given the lack of infrastructure and skills which existed at the outset of the project. It is difficult to assess the extent to which the website has been effective in achieving its aim as no clear purpose was initially identified within the project objectives. The project identified the need to use a website as a communication tool from the outset, and set about getting the site up and running. It is only in retrospect that the project co-ordinators are beginning to question what it was that they were attempting to achieve by doing this.

### **The purpose of the website**

What is unclear about the development of the website is to which project objective it related. The project co-ordinators have differing impressions as to why the website was initially created, what its purpose was, and therefore whether it has been an effective communication tool or not. It seems that there was a general acceptance that using a website to share information was the only clear and common understanding of why it should be developed. The reasons given by the project co-ordinators for the establishment of the website were as follows:

- It would improve communication thereby supporting the improvement of the environment of the catchment area.
- In generating information it would develop skills.
- It was an important way to view each other's information.
- It would create a sense of pride and identity for the hubs.
- Communication through the web had not been done before around these issues so it would be unique.

- It was merely one of a range of communication tools being used by the project.

There was no initial discussion around who the target audience of the website would be, and what purpose posting information would have. There was an assumption, which was not necessarily even articulated, that hubs should post information about their work which would be useful to the other hubs in the project, similar organisations, and any interested browsers globally.

### **The process of development**

In developing the website, the project team attempted to follow a thorough planning process. Each hub met individually to decide what information should be posted on their site. There was discussion around branding and creating a clear individual identity for each hub, which related to the issue of catchment management that concerned the hub.

This process worked well with the results being that each hub had a clear idea of what they wanted their site to look like and what information it should contain. The discussions around content of the sites centred around what information they had available and what it was that they wanted to share with the other hubs. There was limited, if any, discussion about who would be viewing their sites, and why particular information was important to share.

Most of the hubs initially wanted their sites to contain photographs of the team along with other information. This indicates their need to use the website to establish their own identities as organisations.

## **Crucial issues to note that have emerged from the evaluation**

- The social economy of the network (the relations amongst and between hubs and the central node, GREEN) has remained intact despite the electronic connectivity being interrupted from time to time;
- The social economy of the network owes much to the dedication of the GREEN animators, and its connection to a broad range of organizations which go beyond purely environmental issues;
- The social economy of the network still relies heavily on face-to-face interaction, as does the transfer of skills (through the mobility of significant individuals involved with GREEN);
- The nature of the communities within which the hubs are situated has created a number of problems;
- The tensions generated between the imperative of hub sustainability and the goal of information sharing have created some uncertainty with regards to the primary focus of organizations;
- The hubs have not really provided a public service, and consequently have not developed into public access points for information sharing;
- Stakeholders have provided favorable reports on the network, although these are often related to the specific organizations responsible for hubs;
- The development of skills has resulted in some losses to the network, although this has not affected the operation of hubs per se;

- There have been a number of problems associated with the specific communicative aspect of the project (the website, training for use of internet, publications);
- There have been a number of problems associated with managing the connectivity (excessive phone bills and ISP costs).

On completion of Phase 1 there was a hiatus of about six months before funding for Phase 2 came through. Both GREEN and INR felt that this hiatus created a number of problems, although it is not clear how this situation came about. During this period the network effectively ceased to function, debts were incurred, and the momentum created in Phase 1 was lost. People had to find other ways to live.

Phase 2 also saw a change in the nature of the collaboration between INR and GREEN. INR took on the responsibility for training, with GREEN taking more responsibility for the management of the network. This shift has not been easy as the tension between sustaining the network and building capacity, both essential ingredients for success, were driven farther apart.

The experience of having to rebuild the network (not as a social entity, but as a collection of functioning hubs) has also been the impetus to develop strategies for the sustainability of individual hubs, and it is during Phase 2 that we see the emergence of independently funded projects associated with organizations responsible for hubs (as in the Land Care projects, LIFE project) and the growing emphasis on generating funds (preparation of business plans, fund-raising training and the setting up of a training centre in GREEN itself).

This scenario exacerbates some of the earlier tensions: as people in the hubs are increasingly under pressure to find alternative sources of funding, so too their commitment to developing the network with the primary aim of creating an environmental network with community access is also under pressure.

## **Lessons learned**

### **Participants**

The major stumbling block to assessing learning amongst participants in the project is that of perspective. There is no coherent measure of how much the various hub operators have really learned, both in terms of the technology and in terms of application. A thorough and careful audit of skills should have been conducted early on, and monitored throughout. This is not simply a question of skills however, but of the interest and exploration that individuals express and display. Have they become real intermediaries and information seekers, and do they know what to do with information and how it may be useful to somebody else? There is no doubt that some individuals have good skills, but are they transferable?

Clearly, the active members of GREEN have become multi-skilled, and act as ‘infomediaries’, and have become indispensable to the network as a whole as ‘problem solvers’ and ‘intelligence dispensers’. They have ideas and actively seek to make things happen.

However this is not an automatic result of the network, but strongly dependent on commitment and motivation. As the hub organizations become drawn into the strategizing of sustainability, and the preparation of proposals and activities associated with the projects they establish, this flexibility and enthusiasm for the technology may be diluted. But not always.

It is important that such people remain close to the network, and are not simply 'accessed' from time to time when a job needs doing. The whole ICT phenomenon, in the context of development, bears testimony to this. While it may be unavoidable to require the services of multi-skilled individuals, the real question is: How can these people be more systematically enrolled into the social economy of the network?

### **Information and communication**

Phase 1 established the infrastructure of the network as a 'communicative community', adding a new dimension to the existing social network. The addition of email in particular, provided new contact opportunities, but brought with it new challenges (mainly costs, but also new forms of self discipline). The web pages too provided a broader canvas for the network, but created a far larger hurdle: how to mesh the possibilities inherent in the new accessibility of information with both the foundations of the project (the flood crisis of 1995) and the diversity of interests inherent in a network rooted in quite different communities, with different organizational capabilities.

The most obvious success in this regard is the status of having an electronic network up and running, both from the point of view of the identity of the network and its position vis-à-vis local organizations (both formal and informal). There is a sense in which having a web page



was enough. The problem of making the Internet really useful has waxed and waned, but the capacity has always been a strength of the network.

It is also clear that the connectivity also reconfigured the hub organizations with reference to other NGOs and CBOs, adding something to the sector as a whole, which, in a period of declining civil society momentum, is an important outcome.

Good examples of the usefulness of the Internet access have been provided, but they tend to be associated with clarity of organizational purpose rather than a general meeting of minds (the issue of information on recycling for example). Some strong partnerships have developed, but only when a clarity on 'need' has been established.

## **Discussion**

There are two central issues which bear on the above cases, and which draw our attention towards the problem of theory, and away from the continuous descriptive perspective that haunts many efforts to understand the telecentre phenomenon, and other initiatives that seek to use ICT's for development.

These are the twin notions of affordances and culture, and both are significant if we are to consider new technologies, and their representations, as revolutionizing social life.

### **Affordances**

Dorsteler (n.d.) defines 'affordances' as the **possibilities** that an object or environment offers (or appears to offer) in order to perform an action upon it. The concept of 'affordance'

was introduced by the theorist of perception, J.J. Gibson in order to designate the possibilities of action that an object or environment offers (or we perceive that it offers). Gibson, unlike many theorists of his time, considered that the way we perceive the world is oriented towards acting upon the environment.

Furthermore, this concept has been developed by Hutchby (2001) in his efforts to explore the relationship between forms of technology and structures of social interaction. Beginning by arguing against the view that a technology has no intrinsic properties, and becomes 'useful' only through a process of negotiation and rhetoric, Hutchby suggests that technologies do have intrinsic capabilities, which emerge in the context of encountering them (2001: 26).

In the case of new ICT's at a telecentre for example, the affordances are partially material and partially representations. The computer cannot be used as a bicycle, which attests to its functional affordances, but it can be used as a way of saying something about a community (even if it doesn't work, the computer may be invoked as a status symbol or a rhetorical signifier of modernity). This authors experience (and that of Wilson {2001}) indicates that the majority of 'users' are not able to say exactly what the computers can do for them (particularly the Internet). Indeed, most people in the community don't know what information they lack. The work conducted at Mbazwana indicates clearly that information needs cannot be separated from the general way in which the community is organized, and the role of traditional authorities in particular.

Affordances are not simply constructions of individuals however, for as Rubinstein (2001:139) argues, there are collective practices which enable things as opportunities; they emerge within a form of life. Furthermore, the concept can be extended to culture as well, insofar as culture itself is an affordance. Cultural objects can be defined in different ways. For example, at Bhamshela where there is currently no electricity, the computers are nevertheless being used for 'training': a charming ruse for a group of seven women to get together regularly. This view goes beyond sociological thinking that sees opportunity as mediated by cultural capital or cultural equipment, to a point at which actors deploy culture. Cultural capital is not a resource that one has or lacks; it is a resource that can be used to engage the world. One only has cultural capital when it is actually mobilized: and each 'opportunity' presents itself differently.

This is a view that is quite different from the more institutional perspective that dominates the current discourse of 'information for development'. For example, Stavrou (2001), in his work on information for underdeveloped communities, suggests that "contextually relevant, easily accessible and affordable information **should reduce uncertainty**" and, "for groups who do not have access to information, the outcome is a dramatic increase in the transaction cost component of any economic activity and a drastic decrease in their ability to exercise their social and political rights" (Stavrou 2001). This perspective is well summarized by Stavrou again, when he argues, "the current view **should be** that information is central to the solution of any society's economic and social problems, and as such should be regarded as a factor of production".

Colle and Roman (2002: 6) echo Gillwald (2001) when they suggest, “one of our biggest challenges is providing relevant information and services for [its] stakeholders.

Organizations are working on content problems, but much of the information available via electronic networks may not meet communities’ needs for local and localised information”.

But this begs the question: what information (electronic or not) are we to make available if we do not know its affordances, its potentialities, for ordinary people? Gomez et al. (1999: 24) are clear about this: “ Despite the euphoria surrounding ICT’s and development, as yet there is little understanding of the role of telecentres in social development”.

Hutchby (2001: 206) is also quite clear on this matter when he argues that,

Technologies do not impose themselves on society, mechanistically altering the pattern of human relations and social structures. Neither does human agency encounter technologies as blank states. Technologies do not make humans; but humans make what they do of technologies in the interface between the organized practices of human conversation and the technology’s array of communicative affordances.

We can begin to unpack the affordances of ICT’s as they emerge from these two case studies, in only a very partial way as it is only through ongoing study that one gradually comes to understand the gradual interlocking of people’s projects with the new resources.

In Bhamshela the telecentre does offer concrete possibilities for instrumental use of a range of services (phones, faxes, printing, TV etc), but also a range of affordances:

- for politically motivated individuals to further their interests;
- for new collectivities to form;
- for new circuits of information (networks) to be created;

- for a new vision of hope;

This author does not know all of the affordances in this situation, particularly as circumstances change, but is certainly no more enlightened by the descriptive ‘research’ which counts phone calls, measures distances, elicits wish-lists and examines profitability.

For the Msunduzi Network, it is clearer: affordances for those within the organizational parameters of the network include:

- access to donor funding;
- consolidation of personal networks through rapid communication;
- filling the gap left by political activism;
- insertion into a status hierarchy;
- increasing job opportunities;

This notion of affordances does open up some interesting possibilities, but poses an enormous challenge to researchers: a challenge that goes beyond identifying ‘best practice’ and saluting determined entrepreneurial managers. We know that most information needs as expressed in poor communities refer to rights or services, but we must still ask the question: who participates and in what way, other than as consumers, in the revolution offered by ICT’s.

## **Culture**

Culture in the South African context is a problematic concept. It is so bound up with the history of oppression and the founding perspective of Apartheid as to render it razor sharp.

Crane Soudien (2001: 147) refers to Neville Alexander's view that the envisaged Commission on the Rights of Cultural groups is constitutionalising ethnic politics in an ideological climate where *culture has become synonymous with race*. The dream of a post-Apartheid social identity, constructed to retain aspects of indigenous culture but overlaid with a national commitment to the New South Africa cannot easily escape from the legacy of group realities and experiences based on day-to-day life in a highly unequal and spatially divided society.

Nevertheless, if we are to consider culture as an affordance which 'spotlights' opportunity, we cannot avoid looking into the norms, values and dispositions that provide the grammar of sociality and action. Once again, we face the dilemma of surveillance, and the difficult task of interpreting actions from the perspective of an outsider.

Be that as it may, the old 'dominant paradigm' of communication for development represented culture as foundational (in line with the Parsonian tradition), and argued for the sweeping away of anachronistic cultural features as a precondition for modernization. The new perspective, underpinned by a rational choice perspective of *homo economicus* avoids the issue of culture altogether, invoking instead the notion of social capital (see Campbell 2003) as the institutional framework of social action.<sup>8</sup>

The 'hard' participatory model of communication for social change, on the other hand, starts with culture and uses a broad definition of 'way of life' to open the door to authentic communication. Chin (2000:26) encapsulates this perspective well when arguing, "to lose

---

<sup>8</sup> The concept of social capital is increasingly part of the language of development, and has begun to inform communication for development debates as part of an emerging consensus on strategies for poverty reduction/alleviation (see Baas and Rouse 1997).

one's cultural identity therefore is to be deprived of an opportunity to develop on one's own terms".

We must now find a way between these two poles: the 'culture-less', rational, maximizing actor for whom information is a cost-benefit, and the 'culture-full' actor whose opportunities and needs are necessarily subservient to a form of life. Both approaches are profoundly disrespectful of the complexities of sociality and the mechanisms and processes of social action.

## **Conclusions**

There are two important issues arising: first, the policy environment within which the telecentre initiative has unfolded. There remains some debate about the efficacy of the policy, but there is no doubt that the implementation has not yet shown many signs of success (Gillwald 2001). More significantly perhaps is the lip service paid to participation and the construction of the telecentre participants as 'users' and consumers, rather than as actors negotiating culture and opportunity.

Wilkins and Waters (2000) are quite explicit about the discursive leanings in 40 projects (involving ICT's) they reviewed. Roughly half of these projects articulate a 'participatory' focus rather than a clear economic one, but most of these construct ICT's as channels for the transmission of information, with only a few setting out to build community, promote dialogue or create new identities. Their conclusion is that the introduction of ICT's into

development interventions has done little to reconfigure approaches to communication, focusing instead on matters of access, and distributable content.

Secondly, to inject another perspective into the way we might theoretically begin to untangle the threads that make up the phenomenon of ICT's in a developing context. Hutchby's comment that,

this third way between the (constructivist) emphasis on the shaping power of human agency and the (determinist) emphasis on the constraining power of technical capacities has enabled me to argue that the affordances of technological media for interaction shape the nature of sociality" (2001:194)

could also provide a starting point in a new evaluation of the role ICT's could play in disadvantaged contexts.

Furthermore, such an orientation could make a significant impact on the scientism and largely descriptive assessments of ICT impact, by broadening the notion of participation beyond its immediate political connotations (organizational). The praxis, the ethical and practical understanding of social action, is a project, and as such must seek a space on the agenda that currently dominates the ICT phenomenon: that new information and communication technologies will revolutionize social life.



## Concluding remarks

We need to bear in mind that for the vast majority of people, the world over, there are crucial ways in which life can be improved through information, knowledge and communication resources and practices. There is no doubt that this is the driving force behind most communication in/for development initiatives. With the World Summit on the Information Society providing the impetus, comes the institutional sanctioning of both a global 'reality', and a theoretical field: and of course an opportunity to shape discourse and practice. This thesis, which has provided some critique of theory and practice, has not specifically set out to develop strategies and advocacy tools. Some ideas may have emerged, but the intention of providing such a broad-based perspective is to avoid the 'silo-ing' of understanding (or knowledge) when ruthlessly pursuing an 'expert' status in one (or even a few) aspect/s of the field.

While there is a general global discussion about information and communication (and the technologies that underpin them), and their role in social and economic development in its broadest sense, there is also a growing concern with information and communication strategies associated with development as a discourse of upliftment, empowerment and capacity building, which is project based.

All participants to these diverse endeavors become part of the conversations, and interpret them according to their own interests, investments and interpreted outcomes. Building a stock of 'best practices' is fraught with difficulty as these 'models' are translocated in time

and space. There is no magic formula (not just for ensuring that telecentres work), but for perceptibly successful communication itself, and yet the urgency grows ever stronger, as communication itself becomes recognizably a central feature of its own terrain. Elsewhere, we have argued that the process of mobilizing communication as a panacea for the failure of communication is an important characteristic of the unthinking infatuation with information and knowledge (Burton, Stilwell and Leach 2002).

In a context where the current Director General of the Department of Communications, Mr Andile Ngcaba can issue the following challenge: “Ensure that information to rural and marginalized communities and sectors of our society is not manipulated and that they are allowed access to information to drive their development and wellbeing” (2002: 22), the question must be asked: who exactly, in a rural/marginalized context are we talking about? It is clear from both the research in Chapter 2, and case studies (Mbazwana, Bhamshela), that women are in a distinctly more vulnerable position with regards to information, notwithstanding their comprehension of this reality. Information is not a neutral instrument or resource, and we are reminded of the way it in fact contributes to social relations. This is not to downplay the seriousness of a national gender equality project, and the many women’s CSO’s, but simply to drive home the point that communication and information are part of the everyday tactics and strategies of the actor. And, that actors are not only individuals, but agencies, groups, organizations and collectivities of all kinds. One of the central lessons of the participatory approach is its instinctive recognition of this, rather than the construction of an undifferentiated population of cultural ‘dopes’, or a highly differentiated set of individual maximiser’s.

Presumably the sinister feel about Ngcaba's use of the word 'manipulate' is unwarranted, as it is nothing more than a light political throwaway. But the point is important: content issues abound in our review of cases. On the matter of content, the twin poles of mass media (messages from one source to many receivers) and participatory communication (messages from many sources to many receivers) pose similar problems: they are mediated by macro-, meso-, and micro-level negotiations, which are context dependent and indeterminate (in the sense that messages are always 'an interpretation'). Part of the development communication mandate, for want of a better word, is the reduction of this indeterminacy, and we have seen numerous examples of the way in which this happens through planning technologies, assumptions about discourses, marketing strategies, needs analyses, technology platforms, partnerships, and so on. Each of the case studies offers a glimpse of the particular matrix of social relations, organizational powers and institutional contexts that constitute the interface parameters of the situation. The actor based approach does not offer a respite from the demands of thinking 'into' the complexity, and interconnection, between and among the nodes or points of such a matrix. As Long has remarked, "After all, it is the day-to-day decisions, routines and strategies devised for coping with uncertainties, conflicts of interest and cultural difference that make or break policy" (2001: 91)

By focusing on an actor approach is not the same as adopting a form of constructivism, but neither does it allow us to concentrate only on everyday social practice, but also, larger scale institutional frameworks, resource fields, networks of communication, and socio-political arenas. An effort has been made to offer a perspective, however incomplete, on some such matters, for example, historical processes (and their interpretations) and policy. One central weakness of these efforts to draw communication and development on to a bigger canvas is

the failure to adequately analyze the economics/resources dimension. Communication in/for development comes with a budget, and the price tag inevitably becomes part of the matrix.

.....

At present in South Africa, the two most significant challenges facing development communication are, first, the discourse/rhetoric of the information society, and the associated difficulties in building the most appropriate strategies and capacities to engage with new information and communication technologies, in strengthening the project of social upliftment. Secondly, the importance attached to mass mobilization towards valued social behavior through targeted messaging. While these constitute the most public, and politically 'hot' dimensions of the field, they are both inextricably bound up with the broader issues underpinning communication and development.

Theoretically, they offer a view from both ends of the spectrum: the dominant paradigm with its emphasis on mass media as an agent of social or individual (behavior) change, and a participatory approach (it hardly warrants the nomenclature of a 'paradigm'), with its emphasis on facilitating a dialogue leading to some concrete action (a decision, an outcome, empowerment, or even a revolution). And yet these two challenges themselves appear to have reversed the way we normally think about the historical and theoretical location of each of these approaches. The mass media driven initiatives (like *Soul City* and *loveLife*) have sought more and more to broaden their interventions (by diversifying the media associated with the intervention, and providing support systems), while the smaller scale

ICT interventions, so easily located in a participatory framework, are confronting communities as something 'from above'. In the former, what has been thought of as the transmission communication model *par excellence* has incorporated ideas about process and exchange, while the latter are interpolating local people (in a community of sorts) as individual 'users'.

This blurring of the spectrum, or convergence, as Waisbord (2001) calls it, is explained by "a growing consensus that a multiple approach that combines 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' interventions is recommended" (2001: 33). While the field remains fragmented, reflecting a myriad of intellectual trajectories, the efforts of people like Jan Servaes "to integrate dissimilar models and strategies" (2001: 28) meets with Waisbords' approval. On the other hand, Huesca (2002) is critical of such efforts, suggesting that the strong grassroots orientation of the participatory framework (built on its rejection of the evolutionism and 'anti-culture' stance of the early dominant paradigm) is increasingly being subjected to a discourse of 'global ethics', human rights and democracy. He goes on to suggest that

this tension between a rejection of universal approaches and the advocacy of global principles is a contradiction that permeates the development communication field generally in its attempts to reconcile subjectivity/agency and structure/political economy (2002: 507).

In fact, the recognition by early dominant paradigm defenders (like Rogers, Lerner and Schramm) of their oversimplified approach to development communication (as individualistic, evolutionary and mass media oriented) led to an acknowledgement of the importance of participation and networks (the shift from a hypodermic to 'two step flow' model). But Huesca is also drawing our attention back to some of the dualities and dilemmas

which were outlined at the beginning of this work. What has emerged is less an attempt at resolving these issues, than a pragmatic perspective which demonstrates the variety of development communication activities, and the challenges emerging from them. The combined weight of sociology, development studies and communication studies is no closer to providing a template for successful communication for development than they were a decade ago. This is not to say that no learning has occurred, or that the terms of many of these debates have not shifted, but merely to re-iterate the fact that these debates are part of a chain of thoughts and actions which unfold in a messy and often, inconclusive way.

There is, however, another aspect to the contradiction identified by Huesca (2002) which is mirrored in the contradictions identified by Richard Heeks (1999a) in his assessment of the 'tyranny of participation'. Arguing that the notion of participation is subject to numerous deformations, we are drawn back to the concept of affordances. His view that participation is often,

- nothing more than a veneer (in order to please, or prevent objections);
- inequitable (due to political context, or social position, for example, women);
- skewed (by forms of representation);
- non-communicative (because of mindsets, culture or languages);
- career-enhancing

alerts us to a dialectical process in which people identify opportunities and possibilities that are in keeping with the socio-cultural frameworks within which they live. However, Heeks' broad critique of the ways in which participation can be distorted through ignoring context, and ignoring reality, cannot be sustained. People act or do not act, for reasons which they

may be more or less clear about: the Msunduzi network is a good example of unrealized potential owing to the difficulties associated with new forms of organization needed, the particularities of what bound the actors together in the first place, and the affordances the project manifested.

This brings us to distinction made by Melkote (1991) and White (1994) between participation as a means, and participation as an end. Depending on the context, participation as ‘means’ potentially founders on the process of deciding the ‘ends’ outside of the participatory process (and is the dominant paradigm in disguise – the African Renaissance Project, for example), while participation as an end in itself, potentially founders on the probability of upsetting established power relations. Thinking in these terms is a rather positional approach – and relies on a judgement from outside, as it were. Even Tom Jacobson’s (2002) review of the gradations between (and within) communicative and instrumental action (drawn from Habermas’ distinction) sets up a set of perfect situations that exemplify a planner’s perspective, rather than an actor perspective.

This evaluative mode, or measurement of success, alluded to on numerous occasions in the text, remains a difficulty. Throughout the many efforts to assess success or failure, runs the thread of a possibility that reality can in some way be captured and nailed down. In this regard, we have been guided by Flyvbjerg (2001: 86) again, inasmuch as we are less concerned with ‘maps’ of summaries, concepts, or theoretical formulas – and rather with a narrative, which is a process of learning (see Stewart 2003).

Ien Ang (1994) has also provided a perspective which is useful: by stressing the partial orderliness of the social – its fragility – and the problems associated with claims to have found some such reality (as in the audience, for example). This is nowhere better illustrated than by suggesting that should a study such as that conducted in Pietermaritzburg in the early 1990's, be replicated today, the likelihood of finding similar results is quite remote. The questions that one is likely to pose and the social universe occupied by the respondents would be quite different. We continue to be guided by what has gone before, but should not expect to have those conclusions confirmed. We know that issues of interpersonal contact for example, so central to that study (and to the study of rural information circuits, where ideas of mixing were so strong) are still significant, but the exact modalities of, and weighting accorded to them, will differ in time and space. The following conclusion, to a recent major research project, highlights the importance of interpersonal contact, but leaves us no closer to knowing what actually happens in the course of these encounters:

There appears to be a trend toward taking the problem of HIV/AIDS more seriously by those knowing someone who was HIV positive or who had died of AIDS. This in turn is linked to purported behavior change, although a deeper exploration of this data is necessary (Human Sciences Research Council 2002: 100).

Collectively the case studies, and commentary, foreground the problem of generalization. A participatory approach, for example, does not easily lend itself to wider application of methods (although, as we have seen, the effort to do so continues). Not only are the evaluation mechanisms difficult to define, they are intrinsic to the process itself. Only a normative and regulatory environment will 'insist' on the application of tools that have been specified outside of the interaction/dialogue. This is made very clear by Polly Gaster, writing about telecentres in Mozambique, who suggests that:



The current attempts to systematize and produce common methodologies, manuals and the like for telecentres runs the risk of mystifying the concept, frightening off people and forcing premature conclusions on decision-makers. Anyone wishing to become involved in starting a telecentre should find out as much as possible about other people's experiences, consider how these relate to the local circumstances and culture, and then adapt and build from these (2001: 167).

The assumptions and practices associated with many of the interventions reviewed here (the ESTA Campaign, the African Renaissance Project, alternative video, and telecommunications) have their own contradictions and failings, yet they do not stand as exemplars: they are case studies after all, and each provides the possibility for rational engagement. In general, evaluative commentary on these cases has been kept to a minimum, in the interests of allowing them to speak for themselves: I do not consider myself an expert on all forms of communication for development. At the same time, both Morley (1993) and White (2002) have drawn attention to the problem of a proliferation of micro-studies, and the question of up-scaling learning from small projects to national ones, has become a central issue facing campaign designers.

.....

Weaving together the various strands that make up the case studies remains a difficult task insofar as they all have different foci and groundings. Nevertheless, it is useful to make some general comments about the major actors - the ordinary people (particularly in rural contexts) whose views we have tried to articulate, and the development communicators themselves.

For the former, the 'people', we can offer the following:

- appear to have a good sense of how knowledge and information works, and of its complicity in social affairs;
- little sense of what they do not know, although there are information issues which are a source of frustration, particularly around basic needs;
- little capacity to explore the affordances of new ICT's within certain socio-economic contexts;
- relatively isolated from the mass media, although the mass media are an important source of imagery;
- embroiled in powerful structuring relations with respect to who participates in which circuits of information;
- relatively weak in respect of civil society enrolments, although interpersonal contact remains a central terrain on which information issues are played out.

For the latter, the development communicator, there are two distinct levels: the development support communicator, and the mass media information designer.

The former:

- faces numerous sites and levels of interface;
- is involved in a process of enrolment, consciously or unconsciously;
- is subjected to policy and structural conditions which are difficult to change quickly;
- may have considerable pressures in terms of finance and time;

- is often faced with unintended consequences.

The latter:

- has no independent knowledge of how people appropriate media messages;
- has to have a defensible conceptual regime (of how the media impacts on society), which may or may not match reality;
- has to have a significant infrastructure;
- is driven by a number of competing imperatives, like making money, or fulfilling a quota, aside from the goals;
- is faced with a continuum of social conditions (rich to poor for example) and a social 'order' in which capabilities are not equitably spread;
- is using an increasingly accessible means of communication.

These are rough distillations of complex processes, about which there is much debate, and many questions remain to be studied:

- For example, the question of culture and meanings (as expressed by group singularities), and the targeting aspect of campaigns: in the Disney study we have seen how social structure provides a framework for activities and differences, but a similar study on political attitudes offers us a great many possible interpretations of the way in which this relationship can be construed. One central aspect of this question is how we reconcile the media as a source of cultural resources with efforts

to design media resources – is the dominant media culture the frame of reference for addressing social issues?

- For example, how do we approach the matter of information and knowledge? We have learned about how information is shared, something of the issue of information deficit/poverty, and the crucial dimension of social organization; and that useful, or valuable, content is context dependent. We also know that the social does not offer itself to us as an open book, and we create information communities as we inject projects and approaches into certain contexts (as in the case study of videomaking and the African Renaissance project). Are professional interests and implanted goals the source of unintended affordances we offer through the process of enriching a context with information? And what of the outcomes, in a broader institutional context (for example, the ESTA Campaign, and the African Renaissance project)?
- For example, how do we approach the matter of interfaces? With careful planning, monitoring and evaluation perhaps – although this will raise the question of the nature of the participation or dialogue that can fruitfully be thought to emerge. Norman Long would have us maintain a clear sense of the many possible sites and forms of interfacing, but surely not all of these can be anticipated in advance.
- For example, how do we integrate new technologies into life worlds in such a way as to allow for the greatest possible array of opportunities (issues arising from the Bhamshela and Msunduzi cases)?

These, and many other questions serve to remind us of the complexity of communication, more especially as it is constructed within ‘communication and development’, which

demands more than communication theory and practice, but also a sociological dimension or imagination. By providing a case study approach, cutting across all three fields, we may be approaching a platform from which a more sustained and detailed exploration is possible.

## References

- Adeya, C. N. 2002. *ICT's and Poverty: A Literature Review*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.
- Agunga, R. 1998. Communication for development in Africa – A clarion call. *Communicare*. 17(1): 28-48.
- Aitchison, J. 1990. *Interpreting Violence: the struggle to understand the Natal conflict*. University of Natal: Centre for Adult Education.
- Aitchison, J. 1991. *Numbering the Dead*. University of Natal: Centre for Adult Education.
- AMPS. 1999. *All Media Products Survey*. Johannesburg: South African Advertising Research Foundation.
- Andreasen, A.R. 1995. *Marketing Social Change*. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco.
- Ang, I. 1994. In the Realm of Uncertainty: The Global Village and Capitalist Postmodernity. In Crowley, D. and Mitchell, D. (eds). *Communication Theory Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press: 193-213.
- Ascroft, J. and Masilela, S. 1994. Participatory decision making in Third World Development. In White, S. A., Nair, K. S. and Ascroft, J. (eds). *Participatory communication: Working for change and development*. New Delhi: Sage: 259-294.
- Ashe, F. et al. (eds). 1999. *Contemporary Social and Political Theory*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Barnes, B. 2000. *Understanding Agency: Social Theory and Responsible Action*. London: Sage.
- Barnett, C. 1999. The limits of media democratisation in South Africa: Politics, privatisation and regulation. *Media, Culture & Society* 21(5): 649-671.

- Barnett, C. 2001. Media, Scale, and Democratisation. In Tomaselli, K., and Dunn, H. (eds). 2001. *Media, Democracy and Renewal in Southern Africa*. Colorado Springs: International Academic Publishers: 41-53.
- Baxter, V. 2000. Unizima Lomthwala – Satisfying everyone all of the time in drama and theatre as education. *South African Theatre Journal* 14: 55-72.
- Baas, S. and Rouse, J. 1997. Poverty alleviation: the role of rural institutions and participation. *Land Reform*. No. 1: 75-85.
- Behr, R. L., and Iyengar, S. 1985. Television News, Real-World Cues and Changes in the Public Agenda. *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 49 (1): 38-57.
- Beltran, L. R. 1976. Alien Premises, Objects and Methods in Latin American Communication Research. In Rogers, E. M. (ed). *Communication and development: critical perspectives*. Beverly Hills: Sage: 15-42.
- Beniger, J. R. 1993. Communication - Embrace the Subject, not the Field. *Journal of Communication* 43(3): 18-25.
- Benjamin, P. 2001. The Gaseleka Telecentre, Northern Province, South Africa. In Latchem, C. and Walker, D. (eds). *Telecentres: Case studies and key issues*. Vancouver: The Commonwealth of Learning: 75-84.
- Benjamin, P. 2001a. *Northern Province Community Information Needs Study*. Available at [www.sn.apc.org/community](http://www.sn.apc.org/community).
- Benjamin, P. 2002. Telecentres in South Africa. *The Journal of Development Communication* 12 (2): 16-32.
- Benjamin, P. and Stavrou, I. 2000. *Telecentre 2000 Synthesis Report*. Available at [www.sn.apc.org/community](http://www.sn.apc.org/community).

- Berger, G. 1999. Towards an analysis of the South African media and transformation, 1994-99. *Transformation* 38: 82-116.
- Berger, G. 2001. De-racialization, Democracy and Development: Transformation of the South African Media 1994-2000. In Tomaselli, K. G. and Dunn, H. (eds). *Media, Democracy and Renewal in Southern Africa*. Colorado Springs: International Academic Publishers: 151-180.
- Biocca, F. 1993. Communication Research in the Design of Communication Interfaces and Systems. *Journal of Communication* 43(4): 59-68.
- Booth, D. 1993. Development Research: From Impasse to a New Agenda. In Schuurman, F. J. (ed). *Beyond the Impasse: New directions in Development Theory*. London: Zed Books.
- Booyesen, S. 1991. Mass Media, Social Networks and the Political Socialization of South Africa's White Student. *Communicare* 10(1).
- Botha, C. A. J. 1995. Challenges for agricultural extension in developing countries. *Development Southern Africa* 12(5): 733-749.
- Braman, S. 1989. Defining Information: An approach for policymakers. *Telecommunications Policy*. September: 233-242.
- Braman, S. 2001. Reinventing policy technologies: South African decision-making for the information infrastructure. In Stilwell, C., Leach, A. and Burton, S. *Knowledge, Information and Development: An African Perspective*. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg: School of Human and Social Studies: 2-10.
- Bryman, A. 1999. The Disneyization of society. *Sociological Review* 47(1): 25-47.
- Burger, M. 1998. Information campaigns and local authorities – a DSC case study. *Communicare*. 17(1): 143-159.
- Burkey, S. 1993. *People First: A Guide to Self-reliant Participatory Rural Development*. London: Zed Books.



Burton, S. and Gultig, J. 1993. The more it changes, the more it stays the same: media in the New South Africa. *Africa Quarterly* 32(1-4): 115-125.

Burton, S. and Gultig, J. 1996. Knocking on Heaven's Door: Broadcasting, Media Research, and Transformation in South Africa: A review essay. *Journal of Communication* 46(4): 162-170.

Burton, S., Marcus, T. and Draper, M. 1993. Land Reform, the media and the environment in the development debate in South Africa. Paper presented to the Global Summit on Environmental Education, New Delhi.

Burton, S. 1994. Communication and Change: Lessons from the Rural Television Network. Paper presented to the Annual Conference of the South African Communication Association. Pretoria.

Burton, S. 1994. Organisation and Agency: Some thoughts on community video-making as development support communication. *Communicatio* 20 (2): 2-8.

Burton, S. 1996. Politics, communication and development in South Africa. *Ecquid Novi* 17(2): 159-178.

Burton, S. 1998. Contemplating the future of 'development communication' in South Africa. *Communicare* 17(1): 88-96.

Burton, S. 2001. Disney in South Africa: Towards a common culture in a fragmented society? In Wasko, J., Phillips, M., and Meehan, E. R. (eds). *Dazzled by Disney? The Global Disney Audiences Project*. London: Leicester University Press: 257-268.

Burton, S. 2001. Information and communication for development. In Coetzee, J. K., Graaff, J., Hendricks, F., and Wood, G. (eds). *Development: Theory, Policy, and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 433-447.

Burton, S. and Wittenberg, M. 1991. Media, Violence and a Divided Community. Paper presented to the International Symposium on Media, Protest and Political Violence. Jerusalem.

Burton, S., Leach, A., and Stilwell, C. 2002. Rethinking Information, Development and Libraries: Some themes and issues. *The Journal of Development Communication* 13(2): 75-90.

Business Day. 18 September, 2000.

Butcher, N. 2001. New information technologies and learning in South Africa: Pitfalls and possibilities. In Stilwell, C., Leach, A. and Burton, S. *Knowledge, Information and Development: An African Perspective*. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg: School of Human and Social Studies: 68-87.

Campbell, C. 2003. *'Letting them die': Why HIV/AIDS Intervention Programmes fail*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Carey, J. 1989. *Communication as Culture*. Boston: Unwin.

Carrim, Y. 1993. Indian South Africans in the Transition to a Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Africa Quarterly* 34(1-4): 126-143.

Castells, M. 1999. Information Technology, Globalization and Social Development. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. Discussion Paper No. 14. Available at [www.unrisd.org](http://www.unrisd.org).

Chambers, R. 1997. *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the last first*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.

Chetty, D. R. 1992. Identity and 'Indianness': reading and writing ethnic discourses. Paper presented to the Conference on Ethnicity, Society and Conflict in Natal. Pietermaritzburg.

Chin, S. Y. 2000. Development communication in Asia. In Servaes, J. (ed). 2000. *Walking on the Other Side of the Information Highway: Communication, Culture and Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Penang: Southbound: 22-44.

Chisenga, J. 2001. Facing the Digital Divide: Ensuring Access to Digital Information in Sub-Saharan Africa. Paper presented at the *Library and Information Association of South Africa (LLASA)'s 4th Annual Conference on "African Renaissance Through Libraries"*. Johannesburg.

Chowdhury, N. 2000. Poverty alleviation and Information/Communications Technologies. Available at [www.eb2000.org](http://www.eb2000.org)

Coetzee, J. K. and Graaf, J. (eds). 1996. *Reconstruction, Development and People*. Johannesburg: International Thomson.

Cohen, A. (et al.). 1989. *Social Conflict and Television News*. London: Sage.

Colle, R. D. and Roman, R. 2002. The Telecentre Environment in 2002. *The Journal of Development Communication*. 12 (2): 1-9.

Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization (CTO). 2001. *Information and Communication Technologies in the Commonwealth*. London: Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization.

Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE). 1996. *Let the Sky to be the Limit: Soul City Evaluation Report*. Braamfontein: CASE.

COMTASK. 1996. *Communications 2000: A Vision for Government Communications in South Africa*. Report of the Task Group on Communications to Deputy President Thabo Mbeki.

Conradie, D. P. 1998. Using information and communication technologies (ICT's) for development at centres in rural communities-lessons learned. *Communicare* 17(1): 97-116.

Craig, D. and Porter, D. 1997. Framing Participation: Development projects, professionals, and organizations. In *Development and Patronage: A Development in Practice Reader*. Oxford: Oxfam: 50-57.

Craig, R. T. 1993. Why are there so many communication theories? *Journal of Communication* 43(3): 26-33.

Cramb, R. A. and Wills, I. R. 1990. The Role of Traditional Institutions in Rural Development. *World Development* 18(3): 347-360.

Criticos, C and Quinlan, T. 1991a. Putting Education and Anthropology to Work: Community Video and Ethnographic Documentation in South Africa. *CVA Review*.

Criticos, C. and Quinlan, T. 1991b. Community Video: Power and Process. *Visual Sociology* 6(2).

Crossman, P. and Devisch, R. 2002. Endogenous Knowledge in Anthropological Perspective: A plea for a conceptual shift. In Odora Hoppers, C. A. (ed). *Indigenous Knowledge and the Integration of Knowledge Systems: Towards a Philosophy of Articulation*. Cape Town: New Africa Books: 96-125.

Crush, J. (ed). 1995. *The Power of Development*. London: Routledge.

Davies, S. 1994. Introduction: Information, Knowledge and Power. *IDS Bulletin* 25 (2): 1-13.

De Janvry, A., Sadoulet, E., and Thorbecke, E. 1993. Introduction. *World Development* 21(4): 565-575.

Deacon, R. 1993. Power, Knowledge and Community Video in South Africa. *Working Paper no 8*. University of Natal, Durban: Media Resources Centre.

Dervin, B. 1993. Verbing Communication: Mandate for Disciplinary Invention. *Journal of Communication* 43(3): 45-54.

Diaz-Bordenave, J. 1976. Communication of Agricultural Innovations in Latin America. In Rogers, E. M. (ed). *Communication and development: critical perspectives*. Beverly Hills: Sage: 43-62.

Dickinson, R., Harindranath, R., and Linne, O. (eds). 1998. *Approaches to Audiences: A Reader*. London: Arnold.

Disney sets South Africa subsidy. 1997. *Daily Variety*, July 9: 19.

Dragon, A. G. 2001. *Making Waves: Stories of Participatory Communication for Social Change*. New York: Rockefeller Foundation.

Drotner, K. 1994. Ethnographic Enigmas: 'the everyday' in recent media studies. *Cultural Studies* 8 (2): 341-357.

Dursteler, J.C. n.d. Affordances. *InfoVis.net*. No.72.

Eade, D. 1997. *Capacity-Building: An Approach to People-Centred Development*. Oxford: Oxfam.

Escobar, A. 1997. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World through Development. In Rahnema, M. with Bawtree, V. (eds) *The Post-Development Reader*. Capetown: David Philip: 85-93.

Espitia, D. 2001. *Community ICT Survey*. Available at [www.sn.apc.org/community](http://www.sn.apc.org/community).

Feather, J. 1998. *The Information Society: A study of continuity and change*. London: Library Association Publishing.

Feliciano, G. D. 1976. Communication and Development in South East Asia, 1964-1974. In Schramm, W. and Lerner, D. (eds). *Communication and change: the last ten years – and the next*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii: 191-203.

Fife, T. and Nackerdien, R. 1996. *Rural Local Elections*. Centre for Rural Legal Studies. Stellenbosch: CRLS.

- Figuroa, M. E., Kincaid, D. L., Rani, M., and Lewis, G. 2002. *Communication for Social Change: An Integrated Model for Measuring the Process and Its Outcomes*. The Communication for Social Change Working Paper Series: No.1. New York: The Rockefeller Foundation.
- Flyvbjerg, B. 2001. *Making Social Science Matter*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fourie, P. J. 1994. Post Apartheid South African Media and Development. *Communicatio* 20 (2): 46-54.
- Fourie, P. J. (ed). 2001. *Media Studies: Institutions, Theories and Issues*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Francis, M. 2002. Development communication in rural KwaZulu-Natal: A critical look at the participation of community leaders and community members. Unpublished paper presented at the South African Communication Association Annual Conference. Potchefstroom.
- Fraser, C., and Restrepo-Estrada, S. 1998. *Communicating for Development: Human Change for Survival*. London: I.B. Taurus Publishers.
- Garnham, N. 2000. *Emancipation, the Media and Modernity: Arguments about the Media and Social Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gaster, P. 2001. A Pilot Telecentres Project in Mozambique. In Latchem, C. and Walker, D. (eds). *Telecentres: Case studies and key issues*. Vancouver: The Commonwealth of Learning: 159-171.
- Giddens, A. 1989. Reply to my critics. In Held, D. and Thompson, J. B. (eds). *Social theory of modern societies: Anthony Giddens and his critics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 249-301.
- Gillwald, A. 2001. Building Castells in the ether. In Muller, J., Cloete, N., Badat, S. (eds) 2001. *Challenges to Globalization: South African debates with Manuel Castells*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman: 168-193.

Gillwald, A. 2002. Experimenting with institutional arrangements for communication policy and regulation: The case of telecommunications and broadcasting in South Africa. *South African Journal of Information and Communication* 2(1). Available online at <http://link.wits.ac.za/journal/journal.html>

Golding, P. 1977. Media Professionalism in the Third World: The Transfer of an Ideology. In Curran, J. (et.al). (eds). *Mass Communication and Society*. London: Edward Arnold: 209-308.

Golding, P. 1991. Whose World, What Information, Which Order ? *Media Development* 38 (3): 46-49.

Gomez, R., Hunt, P. and Lamoureux, E. 1999. Telecentre evaluation and research: A global perspective. In Gomez, R. and Hunt, P. (eds). *Telecentre Evaluation: A Global Perspective*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre: 15-30.

Goonasekera, A. 1987. Third World Cultures and a New Information Order. In Jayaweera, N. and Amunugama. S. (eds). *Rethinking development communication*. Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre: 61-75.

Government Communication and Information Service (GCIS). 1999. Multi-purpose Community Centre Business Plan. Available online at [www.gcis.gov.za/mpcc/initiative](http://www.gcis.gov.za/mpcc/initiative)

Gumpert, G. and Drucker, S. 1991. Public Place and Protest. Paper presented to the International Symposium on Media, Protest and Political Violence. Jerusalem.

Gunter, B. 1991. Responding to News and Public Affairs. In Bryant. J, and Zillman, D. (eds). 1991. *Responding to the Screen: Reception and Reaction Processes*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum: 229-260.

Hall, R. 2003. *Tenure Reform on South African Farms*. Unpublished paper. Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies: University of the Western Cape.

- Hall, S. 1980. Encoding/decoding. In Hall, S. (et al). 1980. *Culture, Media, Language*. London: Hutchinson: 128-138.
- Harrison, D. and Steinberg, M. 2002. *Behavior Change: The cornerstone of HIV prevention*. Available online at [www.kff.org/docs/sections/safrica/loveLife.html](http://www.kff.org/docs/sections/safrica/loveLife.html)
- Heeks, R. 1999. Information and Communication Technologies, Poverty and Development. Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester. Available at <http://idpm.man.ac.uk/idpm/diwpf5.htm>
- Heeks, R. 1999a. Participation in Information Systems Projects: The New Tyranny. Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester. Available at [www.man.ac.uk/idpm](http://www.man.ac.uk/idpm)
- Herman, E. and McChesney, R. 1997. *The Global Media*. London: Cassell.
- Hill, M. W. 1998. *The Impact of Information on Society: An examination of its nature, of its value, and usage*. London: Bowker-Saur.
- Hirschowitz, R. and Orkin, M. 1997. Inequality in South Africa: Findings from the 1994 October Household Survey. In Moller, V. (ed). *Quality of Life in South Africa*. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers: 119-136.
- Hobart, M. 1993. Introduction: The Growth of Ignorance. In Hobart, M. (ed). *An Anthropological Critique of Development: The Growth of Ignorance*. London: Routledge: 1-30.
- Hornik, R. 1988. *Development Communication: Information, Agriculture, and Nutrition in the Third World*. Lanham MA: University Press of America.
- Hornik, R. 1989. The Knowledge-Behavior Gap in Public Information Campaigns: A Development Communication View. In Salmon, C.T. (ed). *Information Campaigns*. London: Sage: 113-138.



Horwitz, R. B. 1997. Telecommunications Policy in South Africa. *Communicatio* 23(2): 62-76.

Huesca, R. 2002. Participatory Approaches to Communication for Development. In Gudykunst, W. B., and Mody, B. (eds). *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication*. London: Sage: 499-517.

Hudson, H. E. 1999. *Implementing Telecentre Evaluation: Some considerations*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

Human Sciences Research Council. 2002. *Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study of HIV/AIDS. South African National HIV Prevalence, Behavioural Risks and Mass Media. Household Survey 2002*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council.

Hutchby, I. 2001. *Conversation and Technology: From the telephone to the Internet*. Cambridge: Polity.

Independent Broadcasting Authority. 1995. *Triple Enquiry Report*. Johannesburg: IBA.

Independent Newspapers. 1999. *Reality Check*. Supplement to Independent Newspapers, April 28.

Iyengar, S. 1991. *Is Anyone Responsible?: How Television Frames Political Issues*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.

Jabulani! 1991. *Recommendations towards the future of broadcasting*. Report on Jabulani! Freedom of the Airwaves Conference. Doorn, Netherlands.

Jackson, C. 1997. Sustainable development at the sharp end: field-worker agency in a participatory project. In *Development and Patronage: A Development in Practice Reader*. Oxford: Oxfam: 58-67.

Jacobson, T. L. and Servaes, J. (eds). 1999. *Theoretical Approaches to Participatory Communication*. Cresskill: Hampton Press.

Jacobson, T. L. 1996. Conclusion: Prospects for Theoretical Development. In Servaes, J. (et al). (eds). *Participatory Communication for Social Change*. New Delhi: Sage: 266-277.

Jacobson, T. L. 2002. On differentiating kinds of communication for social change. Paper presented at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Association for Media and Communication Research. Barcelona.

James, T. (ed). 2001. *An Information Policy Handbook for Southern Africa*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

Jayaweera, N. and Amunugama. S. (eds). 1987. *Rethinking Development Communication*. Singapore: AMIC.

Jayaweera, N. 1987. Rethinking Development Communication: A Holistic View. In Jayaweera, N. and Amunugama, S (eds). *Rethinking Development Communication*. Singapore: AMIC: 76-94.

Jensen, J. 1993. The Consequences of Vocabularies. *Journal of Communication* 43(3): 67-74.

Joaquim, E. 2000a. *Tenure Security – how secure can it be?* Pietermaritzburg: Association for Rural Advancement.

Joaquim, E. 2000b. *Have the changes within the Legal Aid Board had an impact on farm dweller land rights?* Pietermaritzburg: Association for Rural Advancement.

Johnston, A. 1990. Trends in Political Communication : A Selective Review of Research in the 1980s . In Swanson, D. L. and Nimmo, D. (eds). *New Directions In Political Communication : A Resource Book*. London: Sage: 329-362.

Kaniki, A. 2001. Community profiling and needs assessment. In Stilwell, C., Leach, A. and Burton, S. *Knowledge, Information and Development: An African Perspective*. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg: School of Human and Social Studies: 187-199.

- Keene-Young, B. 1992. SABC and the Massacre. *African Communist*. No. 130: 28-32.
- Latchem, C. and Walker, D. (eds). 2001. *Telecentres: Case studies and key issues*. Vancouver: The Commonwealth of Learning.
- Lang, K. and Lang, G. E. 1993. Perspectives on Communication. *Journal of Communication* 43(3): 92-99.
- Lazarus, A and Tomaselli, K. 1989. Participatory Video: Problems, Prospects and a Case Study. *Group Media Journal* 8(1): 10-15.
- Leach, A. 1999. 'The best thing is communicating verbally': NGO information provision in rural KwaZulu-Natal. In Stilwell, C., Leach, A. and Burton, S. *Knowledge, Information and Development: An African Perspective*. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg: School of Human and Social Studies: 164-186.
- Leggett, T. 1997. 'South Africa is beautiful as seen on television': Media, culture, consumerism and sport. In Leggett, T., Moller, V. and Richards, R. (eds). *My life in the new South Africa: A youth perspective*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Lerner, D. 1958. *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*. New York: Free Press.
- Levy, M. R. and Gurevitch, M. 1993. Editors Introduction. *Journal of Communication* 43(3): 4-5.
- Lewis, J. 1991. *The Ideological Octopus: An exploration of Television and its Audience*. London: Routledge.
- Lie, R. 1997. Reviews of Servaes, J. (et al) (eds). 1996. *Participatory Communication for Social Change*. New Delhi: Sage, and White, S. (et al)(ed). 1994. *Participatory Communication*. New Delhi: Sage. *Media Development* (2): 38-40.

Long, N. and Long, A. (eds). 1992. *Battlefields of Knowledge: The Interlocking Of Theory and Practice in Social Research and Development*. London: Routledge.

Long, N. and Villareal, M. 1993. Exploring Development Interfaces: From the Transfer of Knowledge to the Transformation of Meaning. In Schuurman, F. (ed). *Beyond the Impasse: New directions in Development Theory*. London: Zed Books: 140-168.

Long, N. 1988. Sociological Perspectives on Agrarian Development and State Intervention. In Hall, A. and Midgeley, J. (eds). *Development Policies: Sociological Perspectives* Manchester: Manchester University Press: 108-133.

Long, N. 2001. *Development Sociology: Actor perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Louw, P. E. 1995. Considerations on some possible communication policies for development agencies. *Journal of Development Communication* 6(1): 56-75.

Louw, P.E. 1994. Communication technology and democracy in the development of South Africa. *Communicare* 13(2): 86-102.

Louw, P. E. (ed). 1993. *South African Media Policy: Debates of the 1990s*. Bellville: Anthropos Publications.

Lull, J. 1990. *Inside Family Viewing: Ethnographic Research on Television's Audiences*. London: Routledge.

Lull, J. 1994. *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach*. Cambridge: Polity.

Lunt, P. and Livingstone, S. 1996. Rethinking the Focus Group in Media and Communication Research. *Journal of Communication* 46(2): 79-98.

Mansell, R and Wehn, U. 1998. *Knowledge Societies: Information Technology for Sustainable Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Marcus, T. 1994. Land reform in rural restructuring programmes: Comparative policy approaches and experience from the developing world. *Development South Africa* 11(4): 511-525.
- Martin-Barbero, J. 1993. *Communication, Culture and Hegemony*. London: Sage.
- M<sup>c</sup>Intosh, A., Quinlan, T. and Vaughan, A. 1993. Towards an independent civil society: limits and possibilities in rural areas. Unpublished paper for the *Project for Civil Society* of the Albert Einstein Institute South African program at the University of Witwatersrand.
- McQuail, D. 1994. *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. Third Edition. London: Sage.
- Melkote, S. R. and Steeves, H. L. 2001. *Communication for Development in the Third World: Theory and Practice for Empowerment*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New Delhi: Sage.
- Melkote, S. R. 1991. *Communication for Development in the Third World: Theory and Practice*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Mody, B. 1993. *Designing Messages for Development Communication: An Audience Participation-based Approach*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Morley, D. 1990. The Construction of Everyday Life: Political Communication and Domestic Media. In Swanson, D.L. and Nimmo, D. (eds). *New Directions in Political Communication: A Resource Book*. London: Sage: 123-146.
- Morley, D. 1993. Active Audience Theory: Pendulums and Pitfalls. *Journal of Communication* 43(4): 13-19.
- Mowlana, H. and Wilson, L.J. 1990. *The Passing of Modernity: Communication and the Transformation of Society*. New York: Longman.
- Mundy, P. A. and Compton, J. L. 1995. Indigenous Communication and Indigenous Knowledge. In Warren, D. M., Slikkerveer, L. J. and Brokensha, D. (eds) *The Cultural*

*Dimension of Development: Indigenous Knowledge Systems*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications: 112-123.

Munro, W. 1996. Re-Forming the Post-Apartheid State? Citizenship and Rural Development in Contemporary South Africa. *Transformation* 30: 1-30.

Murdock, G. 1990. Redrawing the Map of the Communication Industries: Concentration and Ownership in an Era of Privatisation. In Ferguson, M. (ed). 1990. *Public Communication: The New Imperatives* London: Sage: 1-15.

Nain, Z. 2001. From pedagogy to praxis: Freire, Media education, and Participatory Communication. In Richards, M., Thomas, P. N., and Nain, Z. (eds). *Communication and Development: The Freirean Connection*. Cresskill, Hampton Press: 209-224.

Natal Witness. 9/5/1996, 16/5/1996.

Netshitenzhe, J. 1999. The Media in the African Renaissance. In Makgoba, M. W. (ed). *African Renaissance: The New Struggle*. Cape Town: Mafube Publishing and Tafelberg Publishers: 376-385.

Ngcaba, A. 2002. The nature of journalism and media in South Africa – An electronic media overview. Keynote address at the highwayAFRICA2002 Conference. Grahamstown.

Ntuli, P. P. 2002. Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the African Renaissance. In Odora Hoppers, C. A. (ed). *Indigenous Knowledge and the Integration of Knowledge Systems: Towards a Philosophy of Articulation*. Cape Town: New Africa Books: 53-66.

Nyamnjoh, F. B. 1997. South Africa's future. *Media Development* 44(1): 68-69.

Ochieng, R. and Radloff, J. 2001. The relevance, usefulness and appropriateness of new information technologies for women in Africa. In Stilwell, C., Leach, A. and Burton, S. *Knowledge, Information and Development: An African Perspective*. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg: School of Human and Social Studies: 88-105.

O'Farrell, C. 2000. Information flows in rural and urban communities: Access, Process and People. International and Rural Development Department, University of Reading. Available at [www.bham.ac.uk/DSA/conf01ofarrell.doc](http://www.bham.ac.uk/DSA/conf01ofarrell.doc)

Oosthuizen, T.H. 1995. South African paradigm shifts and the communications revolution. *Communicatio* 21(1). Available online at [www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

Orna, E. 1999. *Practical Information Policies*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Aldershot: Gower.

Partnership of African Information Advocacy Organizations. 2003. *Our side of the divide: African Perspectives on Information and Communication Technologies*. Windhoek: The Media Institute of Southern Africa.

Pearson, B. 1997. Disney into South Africa. *Daily Variety*, 11 July: 26.

Pool, I de S. 1990. *Technologies Without Boundaries: On Telecommunications in a Global Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Posel, D. 1990. Symbolising Violence: State and media discourse in television coverage of township protest 1985-1987. In Manganyi, N.C. and Du Toit, A. (eds.) 1990. *Political Violence and the Struggle in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Southern Book: 154-171.

*Poverty and Inequality in South Africa* (PIR). 1998. Report prepared for the Office of the Executive Deputy President and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Poverty and Inequality.

Quinlan, T. 1992/3. The Educational Agenda of Sustainable Development and the Potential of Video in Environmental Education. *Perspectives in Education* 14(1): 55-66.

Report of the International Commission on Peace and Food. 1994. *Uncommon Opportunities: An Agenda for Peace and Equitable Development*. London: Zed Books.

Richards, M., Thomas, P., and Nain, Z. (eds). 2001. *Communication and Development: The Freirean Connection*. Cresskill: Hampton Press.

- Rogers, E. M. (ed). 1976. *Communication and development: critical perspectives*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Rogers, E. M. 1976a. Communication and Development: The Passing of the Dominant Paradigm. In Rogers, E. M. (ed). *Communication and development: critical perspectives* Beverly Hills: Sage:121-148.
- Romm, N. 1996. A dialogical intervention strategy for development. In Coetzee, J. K. and Graaff, J. (eds). *Reconstruction, development and people*. Johannesburg: International Thomson: 160-195.
- Roome, D. 1997. Transformation and Reconciliation: 'Simunye', a Flexible Model. *Critical Arts* 11(1/2): 63-94.
- Rosengren, K. E. 1993. From Field to Frog Ponds. *Journal of Communication* 43(3): 6-17.
- Roxborough, I. 1979. *Theories of Underdevelopment* London: Macmillan.
- Rubinstein, D. 2001. *Culture, Structure and Agency: Toward a truly multidimensional society*. London: Sage.
- Russell, D. (ed). 1992. *Learning to Listen, Learning to Learn. Experiences from a South African Radio Forums Research and Development Project*. University of the Witwatersrand: Centre for Continuing Education.
- Salmon, C. T. (ed). 1989. *Information Campaigns: Balancing Social Values and Social Change*. London: Sage.
- Samarajiwa, R. 1987. The murky beginnings of the communication and development field: Voice of America and 'The Passing of Traditional Society'. In Jayaweera, N., and Amunugama, S. (eds). *Rethinking development communication*. Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre: 3-19.



Schlemmer, L. and Moller, V. 1997. The Shape of South African Society and its Challenges. In Moller, V. (ed). *Quality of Life in South Africa*. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers: 15-50.

Schoen, R. 1996. Fitting Projects to People or People to Projects? In Servaes, J. (et al) (eds). *Participatory Communication for Social Change*. London: Sage: 249-265.

Schramm, W. 1976. Data on Communication Systems in Three Developing Regions. In Schramm, W. and Lerner, D. (eds). *Communication and Change: The Last Ten Years and The Next*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii: 11-15.

Schramm, W. and Lerner, D. (eds). 1976. *Communication and Change: The Last Ten Years and The Next*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.

Schramm, W. 1964. *Mass Media and national Development*. California: Stanford University Press.

Schuurman, F. J. (ed). 1993. *Beyond the Impasse: New Directions in Development Theory*. London: Zed Books.

Schuurman, F. J. 1993. Introduction: Development Theory in the 1990s. In Schuurman, F. J. (ed). *Beyond the Impasse: New Directions in Development Theory*. London: Zed Books: 1-34.

Servaes, J. 1996. Linking theoretical perspectives to policy. In Servaes, J. (et al). (eds). *Participatory Communication for Social Change*. New Delhi: Sage: 82-105.

Shepherd, G. J. 1993. Building a Discipline of Communication. *Journal of Communication* 43(3): 83-91.

Singh, J. P. 2002. Communication Technology and Development: Instrumental, Institutional, Participatory, and Strategic Approaches. In Gudykunst, W. B., and Mody, B. (eds). *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication*. London: Sage: 479-497.

Singhal, A. and Rogers, E. M. 1999. *Entertainment – Education: A communication strategy for social change*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Singhal, A. and Rogers, E. M. 1989. *India's Information Revolution*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Slovo, J. 1992. A Blind Spot on Violence. *Natal Witness*, October 13.

Smith, R. 2002. *Yizo Yizo* as 'Entertainment Education': The Role of Television in Social Change. Unpublished paper presented at the South African Communication Association Annual Conference. Potchefstroom.

Snyder, L B. 2002. Development Communication Campaigns. In Gudykunst, W. B and Mody, B. (eds). *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication*. London: Sage: 457-478.

Snyman, M. 2002. Getting information to disadvantaged rural communities: the centre approach. In Bothma, T. and Kaniki, A. (eds). *ProLISSA 2002: Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Biannual DISSAnet Conference*. 24/25 October, Pretoria. Glenstantia: Infuse: 333-345.

Sonderling, S. 1997. Development Support Communication (DSC): A change agent in support of popular participation or a double agent of deception? *Communicatio* 23(2): 34-42.

Soudien, C. 2001. Re-imagining, remaking or imposing identity. In Muller, J., Cloete, N., Badat, S. (eds). 2001. *Challenges to Globalization: South African debates with Manuel Castells*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman: 144-149.

Soul City. 2001. *Soul City 4: Theory and Impact*. Available online at [www.soulcity.org.za](http://www.soulcity.org.za)

South African Broadcasting Corporation. 1995. *Delivering Value (Part Three): Choice, Partnerships and Convergence*. SABC: Auckland Park.

Stadler, J. 1995. Development, Research and Participation: Towards a critique of participatory rural appraisal methods. *Development Southern Africa* 12(6): 805-814.

- Stavrou, I. 2001. Information for underdeveloped communities. Paper presented at the International Development Research Centre, Telecentre Learning Workshop. Johannesburg.
- Stehr, N. 2001. *The Fragility of Modern Societies: Knowledge and Risk in the Information Age*. London: Sage.
- Stewart, P. 2003. Introducing social theory to first year sociology students phronetically. *Society in Transition* 34(1): 149-158.
- Sussman, G. and Lent, J. (eds). 1991. *Transnational Communications: Wiring the Third World*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Tichenor, P., Donohue, G. and Olien, C. 1970. Mass media flow and differential growth in knowledge. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 34: 159-170.
- Teer-Tomaselli, R. and Tomaselli, K. G. 1994. Reconstituting Public Service Broadcasting: media and democracy during transition in South Africa. *Communicare* 13(2): 44-66.
- Thompson, J. 1996. Review Essay: Moving the Indigenous Knowledge Debate Forward *Development Policy Review* 14(1): 105-112.
- Thompson, J. B. 1994. Social Theory and the Media. In Crowley, D. and Mitchell, D. (eds). *Communication Theory Today*. Polity Press: Cambridge: 27-49.
- Tomaselli, K. G. and Dunn, H. (eds). 2001. *Media, Democracy and Renewal in Southern Africa*. Colorado Springs: International Academic Publishers.
- Tomaselli, K. G. and Louw, P. E. 1993. Shifts within Communication studies: from idealism and functionalism to praxis - South Africa in the 1980s. In Dervin, V. and Hariharan, U. (eds). 1993. *Progress in Communication Sciences XI*. Norwood: Ablex: 279-313.
- Tomaselli, K.G. and Louw, P. E. 1991. *The Alternative Press in South Africa*. . Bellville: Anthropos.

Tomaselli, K. G. 1989. Transferring Video Skills to the Community: The Problem of Power. *Media Development* 36(4): 11-15.

Tomaselli, K. G. and Shepperson, A. 2001. Re-Semiotizing the South African Democratic Project: The African Renaissance. *Social Semiotics* 11(1): 91-106.

Tomaselli, K. G. and Shepperson, A. 2002. Development and the Supermarket of Ideas: Pragmatism and Development Communication Theory. Paper presented to the South African Communication Association Annual Conference. Potchefstroom.

Tomaselli, R. 1988. Restoring the dignity of the local community: a case study of impartiality, SABC-style. *Reality*.

Tomaselli, K. G. and Louw, P. E. 1989. Alternative Press and Political Practice: the South African Struggle. In Raboy, M. and Bruck, P. A. (eds). *Communication For and Against Democracy*. New York: Black Rose Books: 203-220.

Tomaselli, K. G. and Prinsloo, J. 1992. Video, Realism and Class Struggle: Theoretical Lacunae and the Problem of Power. In Zielinski, S. (ed). 1992. *Video - Apparat/Medium Kunst, Kultuur*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Tomaselli, K. G., Tomaselli, R. E. and Muller, J. (eds). 1987. *The Press in South Africa*. London: James Currey.

Tomaselli, K. G., Tomaselli, R. E. and Muller, J. (eds). 1989. *Broadcasting in South Africa*. London: James Currey.

Trager, M. 1997. Identification and Interpretation: The Bold and the Beautiful and the urban black viewer in KwaZulu-Natal. *Critical Arts* 11(1/2): 95-119.

Tufte, T. 2001. Entertainment-education and Participation: Assessing the communication strategy of Soul City. *Journal of International Communication* 7(2): 25-50.

- Van Audenhove. 1999. South Africa's information society policy: an overview. *Communicatio* 25(1 & 2). Available online at [www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)
- Van Staden, C. 1997. Policing the field of the popular. *Communicatio* 23(2).
- Waisbord, S. 2001. *Family Tree of Theories, Methodologies and Strategies in Development Communication*. New York: The Rockefeller Foundation. Available online at [www.comminit/stsilviocomm/sld-2882](http://www.comminit/stsilviocomm/sld-2882)
- Waisbord, S. 2002. State, Development, and Communication. In Gudykunst, W. B. and Mody, B. (eds). *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication*. London: Sage: 437-455.
- Webster, F. 1995. *Theories of the Information Society*. London: Routledge.
- White, R. 2002. Communication for Development: An Appraisal of Current Theory and Research. Paper presented at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Association for Media and Communication Research. Barcelona.
- White, R. 1994. Participatory development communication as a social-cultural process. In White, S. (ed). *Participatory Communication*. New Delhi: Sage: 95-116.
- White, S. 1994. The concept of participation: Transforming rhetoric to reality. In White, S. A., Nair, K. S. and Ascroft, J. (eds). *Participatory communication: Working for change and development*. New Delhi: Sage: 15-32.
- Wilkins, K. and Waters, J. 2000. Current discourse on new technologies in development communication. *Media Development* No.1. Available online at [www.wacc.org.uk/publications/md/2002.html](http://www.wacc.org.uk/publications/md/2002.html)
- Wilson, M. 2002. Understanding the International ICT and Development Discourse: Assumptions and Implications. *The Southern African Journal of Information and Communication*. Issue No. 3: 85-100.

Wilson, M. 2001. *Information and Communication Technology, Development and the Production of 'Information Poverty'*. Unpublished M.Phil Thesis, Oxford University.

Wittenberg, M. 1991. Group areas, local dependence and social identity: attitudes to desegregation among Whites in Pietermaritzburg. Paper presented to the Biennial Conference of the Political Science Association of South Africa. Hunter's Rest.

Zaller, J. R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: University of Cambridge Press.