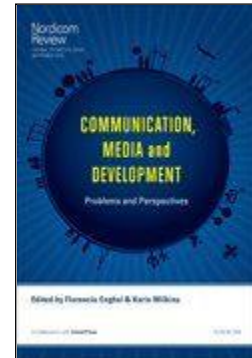


Florencia Enghel and Karin Wilkins (Eds.), **Communication, Media and Development: Problems and Perspectives**, Gothenberg, Sweden: Nordicom, 2012, 240 pp., free (softcover).

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The collection of articles in **Communication, Media and Development: Problems and Perspectives**, a special edition of *Nordicom Review* edited by Florencia Enghel and Karin Wilkins, focuses on communication and media in international development. The collection, featuring contributors mostly from Western and Nordic countries, provides a broad survey of communication and related applications, experiences, and cases involving communication for development in response to the thematic question posed by the editors: “Mobilizing communication globally—for what and for whom?” However, while the volume does present a wide variety of general and specific subjects, it does not unify or link the topics to specific themes, which could have provided a more defined sense of overall purpose.



The collection begins with a discussion of identity politics leading to democratization by Thomas Hylland Eriksen and continues with an analysis by Lisa Richey of biased AIDS awareness campaigns in *Vanity Fair* magazine and in Product Red. Next, Bella Mody writes about the influence of news on the awareness of and commitments to development assistance. Paula Chakravartty then discusses the ICT rebranding by the Indian government.

The African case studies follow: Wendy Quarry and Ricardo Ramírez describe the challenges experienced in Mozambique during an awareness campaign for new property laws; Peter da Costa questions whether community radio is sustainable in Africa; Lebo Ramafoko, Gavin Andersson, and Renay Weiner examine community-produced reality television programming that targets health and development in South Africa, which cites both positive and tense moments; the team of Ylva Ekström, Anders Høg Hense, and Hugo Boothby provide an overview of social media activities in Tanzania as an impromptu community news service during times of crisis for local and diasporic populations; and Emile McAnany explores how social entrepreneurship models, such as the Grameen Bank and Ashoka, can be applied to communication for development. Other articles investigate: the need to develop personal communication networks due to the rise in urban migration (Cees Hamelink); communication in development as an academic discipline as it relates to experimental learning (Oscar Hemer and Thomas Tufte); and transdisciplinary approaches (Helen Odam and Natalie Oram).

The arguments in several articles could be clearer. Rosa María Alfaro Moreno suggests that building communication within communities can lead development, however, she may consider refining her suggested possibilities and potentialities in respect to the provided examples to build a more defined case on what these communities can do. Nora Quebral reports on the dangers that Filipino women face as migrant workers, with special attention to the Middle East, but she could establish a stronger and more pronounced relationship between these gender issues and communication for development. Peter Lemish

and Kelly Caringer examine civil society organizations' management shift to communication in development, yet they could simplify the roles and characteristics of their "critical communicator" and its involvement in civil society.

Two articles in *Communication, Media and Development* deserve special attention: the first, by Pradip Ninan Thomas, focuses on open source software, and the other, by Silvia Balit, describes how development agencies can use communication for development. Both authors show how available technology can be used for development and provide lessons on how it can be deployed.

In "Public Sector Participatory Communications and Social Change," Thomas examines the use of open source software in the Southern Indian state of Kerala for economic development and political transformation. He is initially critical of the Indian government's role in development but credits the state for pursuing joint civil society and government partnerships in the use and deployment of open source software, or public sector software (PSS). PSS adheres to the Free Open Source Software (FOSS) movement—promoting software that is free, nonproprietary, and publicly customizable. Thomas sees potential benefits to civil society if the Indian government creates partnerships to adopt and deploy PSS in that it can take advantage of India's knowledge and information-based society. Thomas views PSS as more cost effective and modular, and it prevents any one proprietary software company from dominating, as was the case with Microsoft in India. He suggests that India follow other countries—United Kingdom, Brazil, South Africa, and Germany—which invest in open source and cost-effective software solutions that push for more "universal and affordable access." Thomas envisions hybrid models of PSS, where open source systems are built upon proprietary-based platforms (such as Microsoft Windows) as an alternative suggested by the state—for example, the e-Granthalaya system that is freely provided to Indian public libraries for library management. However, the public is still wary of this model and favors wholly-owned public software and data.

Thomas argues that open source software can address social and economic development in India, but states that it is also a credible solution in private industry and appears to be gaining some ground within government. Furthermore, open source software can be a cost-effective alternative to ICT in development. Open source public service software will not solve all the ills in Indian civil society, but it can be a crucial step to engaging local communities in accessible e-Government services. As forceful as his argument is, Thomas does not address concerns that may arise with the movement to PSS. He does not propose who will host and manage the PSS or whether it will be public or private. If public, the state may have a monopoly over the PSS and its data. If experts or knowledgeable groups can support, administer, or control PSS, then what is to prevent a nongovernmental group from gaining undue influence over a public service? Which standards should be followed—government or industry? Also, due to the technical nature of e-Governance or any open source system, is there a genuine threat of a rise of technocrats who rule by controlling state-sponsored technology?

In contrast, Silvia Balit's "Communication for Development in Good and Difficult Times: The FAO Experience" considers the case of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and its experiences, both positive and negative, in communication for development. The FAO eventually left the

field in a marginalized and disastrous state. Balit recommends ways to improve communication for development if programs are applied correctly, and if they can gain traction.

Communication for development began in the FAO's Development Support Communication (DSC) Service, where it focused mostly on field communication and education and, to a lesser extent, on public relations or corporate communications. The FAO's success in communication was gradual but consistent enough to gain recognition. It worked in audiovisual training in Latin America, on radio in Africa, and elsewhere. Much of the FAO's success came from its efforts to mainstream its communication programs and make them an integral part of development programs and policies. Despite these successes, the program was reorganized to focus less on communication for development and more on corporate communications. Changes at the FAO occurred at the same time as management changes at the World Bank and the UN did, drawing attention away from the FAO. The organization was left in considerable disarray in its communication for development programs. More recently, though, communication for development at the FAO has regained attention as trends have moved toward community participation.

Although the FAO development program for communication was successful, there is confusion regarding what exactly communication is with respect to communication for development versus communication for public relations. Balit advocates that communication for development be formally built into development programs and integrated into development policies. She favors a two-way conversation in which the development organization gets information from the intended population. Balit also urges that communication for development be aligned with national policies while promoting policy change. She wants to promote shared interests while respecting and preserving local and indigenous cultures and being sensitive to gender issues. Furthermore, she believes that communication for development must be flexible and base itself in the proper political context. There is no single model.

Defining communication is controversial. Balit sees communication as participation and criticizes the FAO's focus on public relations. Using the FAO experience, she treats communication for development as a discipline that can be shared and developed, but she does not state whether her guiding principles were acted upon or put into practice. She faults academics for not training professionals in communication for work in development, but she does not provide specific suggestions for improvement and does not argue that communities have the capacity to create communication for development themselves. With newer communicative technologies available, communities may help themselves from within, thus avoiding the need for outside professionals.

The question of mobilizing communication globally is addressed by *Communication, Media and Development* with regard to the global population for its social, economic, and political development. Most articles successfully address these issues, although some are rather obscure in their approaches and may leave readers puzzled. Nevertheless, students, scholars, and professionals may benefit from the insights provided here on the field of communication for development.