

Thomas Tufte, Norbert Wildermuth, Anne Sofie Hansen-Skovmoes, and Winnie Mitullah, (Eds.), **Speaking Up and Talking Back?: Media Empowerment and Civic Engagement among East and Southern African Youth**, University of Gothenburg, Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom, 2013, 302 pp., \$29.74 (paperback).

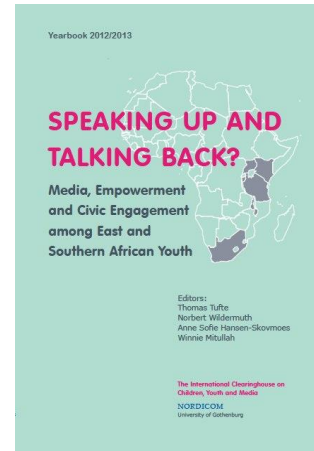
Review by  
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This book is directed at researchers and students interested in examining how communication can be used for social change. It is a handbook full of case studies that focus on how youth and women groups harness the power of the media to work for social change in the Eastern and Southern parts of Africa.

The book is arranged into four parts, each divided into chapters. In Part One, Tufte and Wildermuth, the lead editors, open with a chapter that introduces the key themes upon which successive chapters build. The other three parts are grouped according to the themes ICT, empowerment, and policies; health and social change; and culture and social change.

In addition to serving as an introductory section, Part One dissects the evolution of such concepts as communication for social change. In the chapter "Towards a Renaissance in Communication for Social Change," Tufte notes that the concept is "inherently contradictory" (p. 19). He discusses the assumptions that presuppose the idea that social change will be the end result of communicating. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to analyzing social change principles, including the notion of communication for development and associated challenges. A discussion of this type of communication anchors the chapter by Manyozo, titled "Communication for Development in Sub-Saharan Africa." In the chapter, which concludes Part One of the book, Manyozo carries forward the discussion by arguing that communication for development has "evolved with contradictions" (p. 37). He outlines three different phases that are at the heart of the different ideologies and approaches, beginning with orientalism followed by extensionism and liberation and ending with NGOification. Manyozo does a good job of fully discussing how each of these phases evolved.

The second part of the book deals with the rise of ICT in Kenya. Wildermuth discusses how the country's sociopolitical environment has led to "ICT-for-social-change" (p. 55). The investment in ICT has positively benefited women and youth who are organizing initiatives, points discussed by Mitullah, Mbure, and Githaiga in successive chapters. While Mitullah and Githaiga focus on women and ICT in Kenya, Mbure examines youth participation in social and political issues using online spaces. Mbure explores how different youth groups in Kenya use social media "to become part of the political landscape" (p. 99) in their country. Similarly, Sørensen and Petuchaite explore the intersection between social media and "empowerment" when used by both individuals and civil society groups. In particular, the authors spotlight



the civil society group Ushahidi, which created an online platform as a way to monitor the 2007/2008 postelection violence in Kenya. In line with citizen media, the Ushahidi platform also allowed users to express themselves and to report incidents of violence without being censored. As the authors suggest, the platform filled a gap left by traditional media and allowed "more people to have access to the digital sphere and to become digitally included" (p. 125).

In the third part of the book, there are five chapters dealing with health and social change issues. The opening chapter concentrates on the issue of HIV and AIDS in Africa. Opening this section, Govender uses South Africa as a case study to analyze the different ways in which communication about HIV and AIDS has been approached. She discusses strategies that have worked and those that have failed. Govender's analysis is followed by a chapter titled "Involving Youth in Peer Education" by Nielsen and Schütten. These authors find that youth participation in peer education does not necessarily translate into change. This is because those who manage youth peer leaders fail to emphasize inclusive youth-led initiatives and focus on monitoring young people's movements and work performance, leading to "exacerbated mistrust" (p. 167). As such, there is no mutual understanding and collective decision making. Further, the authors also infer that unnecessary monitoring cripples much-needed HIV- and AIDS-related interventions "characterized by mutual learning" (p. 171).

In the following chapter, Mulwo and Tomaselli do an outstanding job of examining how South African university students respond to HIV and AIDS communication campaigns. The authors conducted a study at seven universities in South Africa and found that "students had their sexual debut at 18 years . . . and were under enormous pressure to engage in sex" (p. 180). Other focus areas in Part Three include the role of civil society in youth sex education in Tanzania. The section concludes with Strand's "Moving Sexual Minority Health Right Forward," a chapter crucial for African and other scholars interested in issues of sexual minorities, under representation, and governance. The chapter deals with the discourse that surrounded the Ugandan Anti-Homosexualite Bill of 2009. Strand looks at ways in which the media and human rights groups can maximize publicity about human rights, especially issues related to sexual minorities.

The fourth and final part of the book focuses on culture and social change. In the first chapter of this section, Junagade articulates the role played by community clubs and how the clubs "open channels of communication in a community" (p. 223) mired in mistrust. Communication for social change in such communities helps to cultivate strong bonds aimed at rebuilding initiatives. Junagade writes that the clubs are a space to "recodify identities" and act as a starting point on a journey of "reconciliation" at war's end. The colorful images in this chapter strengthen the points the author makes about group creativities that instill a sense of community. Similarly, in the next chapter Braskow brings prominence to the role of communication in crime prevention and how youth groups can contribute to crime-free communities. The final three chapters explore the role of community media such as radio and film in generating social change through community participation.

African literature has often been written by outsiders, but this collection of works is largely written by African authors. For this reason, the book is uniquely positioned to contribute to global issues of communication for social change from an African perspective. Drawing from both qualitative and

quantitative research approaches, the book provides insight into social problems that are common across African countries. This culminates in illuminating perspectives and practical strategies for enduring and impactful social change.

This book is a good reference resource for researchers and students at all levels. In particular, researchers and students in the field of mass communication and media would find this book a useful resource. The case studies are informative, the arguments are well laid out, no points are overly deliberated, and each chapter follows methodological precision. Readers are likely to find themselves underlining text on most of the pages. This is a mind-nourishing read. The book achieves its objective of analyzing how youth and women use the media for social change.

One potential pitfall is that although the book is organized into parts, the chapters are not numbered. That makes referencing the book in writings such as this somewhat tricky. As such, I have referred to chapters using author names and chapter titles rather than chapter numbers.