

Chapter 5

Participatory communication: the new paradigm?

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Participatory communication requires *first of all* changes in the thinking of ‘communicators’. The needles, targets, and audiences of communication and development models, combined with self-righteousness, titles, and insecurities, perhaps sprinkled with a dash of misdirected benevolence, often render ‘experts’ a bit too verbose and pushy. Perhaps this is because it requires much more imagination, preparation and hard work to have dialogical learning. It is far easier to prepare and give lectures.

However, there is possibly a valid reason why we have two ears, but only one mouth. Communication between people thrives not on the ability to talk fast, but the ability to *listen* well. People are ‘voiceless’ not because they have nothing to say, but because nobody cares to listen to them. Authentic listening fosters trust much more than incessant talking.

Participation, which necessitates listening, and moreover, trust, will help reduce the social distance between communicators and receivers, between teachers and learners, between leaders and followers as well as facilitate a more equitable exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences. However, the need to listen is not limited to those at the receiving end. It must involve the governments as well as the citizens, the poor as well as the rich, the planners and administrators as well as their targets.

In this chapter we present:

- » an historical overview of the debate on development in general, and development communication in particular, since its emergence on the political agenda in the fifties;

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- » the differences between a so-called diffusionist or top-down communication model versus a participatory or bottom-up communication model;
 - » two general differences in approach within the participatory model, which lead to different 'types' of participatory communication projects, especially at the community media level;
 - » by way of conclusion we identify eleven changes within the communication for social change field which will, in our opinion, further condition and complicate the future of the field.

From modernization, over dependency, to multiplicity

Development communication in the 1950s and 1960s was generally greeted with enthusiasm and optimism. Building on the American scholar Daniel Lerner's influential 1958 study of communication and development in the Middle East and Wilbur Schramm's 1964 study on the role of media for national development, communication researchers assumed that the introduction of media and certain types of educational, political, and economic information into a social system could transform individuals and societies from traditional to modern.

This optimism was in line with the 'Zeitgeist' after the Second World War and the fall of Nazism and fascism. The founding of the United Nations stimulated relations among sovereign states, especially the North Atlantic Nations and the developing nations, including the new states emerging out of a colonial past. Though the 'cold war' clouded this stage of enthusiasm, the superpowers –the United States and the former Soviet Union– tried to expand their own interests to the developing countries. They both started to promote opposite versions of 'modern futures' to the so-called Third World.

In fact, the USA was defining development and social change as the replica of its own political-economic system and opening the way for the transnational corporations. At the same time, the developing countries saw the 'welfare state' of the North Atlantic nations as the ultimate goal of development. These nations were attracted by the new technology transfer and the model of a centralized state with careful economic planning and centrally directed development bureaucracies for agriculture, education and health as the most effective strategies to catch up with those industrialized countries.

This mainly economic-oriented view, characterized by endogenism and evolutionism, ultimately resulted in the *modernization and growth* theory. It sees development as an unilinear, evolutionary process and defines the state of underdevelopment in terms of observable quantitative differences between so-called poor and rich countries on the one hand, and traditional and modern societies on the other hand.

As a result of the general intellectual 'revolution' that took place in the mid '60s, this Euro- or ethnocentric perspective on development was challenged

by Latin American social scientists, and a theory dealing with *dependency and underdevelopment* was born. This dependency approach formed part of a general structuralist re-orientation in the social sciences. The 'dependistas' were primarily concerned with the effects of dependency in peripheral countries, but implicit in their analysis was the idea that development and underdevelopment must be understood in the context of the world system.

This dependency paradigm played an important role in the movement for a New World Information and Communication Order from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. At that time, the new states in Africa, Asia and the success of socialist and popular movements in Cuba, China, Chile and other countries provided the goals for political, economic and cultural self-determination within the international community of nations. These new nations shared the ideas of being independent from the superpowers and moved to form the Non-Aligned nations. The Non-Aligned Movement defined development as political struggle.

Since the demarcation of the First, Second and Third Worlds has broken down and the cross-over centre-periphery can be found in every region, there is a need for a new concept of development which emphasizes *cultural identity and multidimensionality*. The present-day 'global' world, in general as well as in its distinct regional and national entities, is confronted with multifaceted crises. Apart from the obvious economic and financial crisis, one could also refer to social, ideological, moral, political, ethnic, ecological and security crises. In other words, the previously held dependency perspective has become more difficult to support because of the growing interdependency of regions, nations and communities in our globalized world.

From the criticism of the two paradigms above, particularly that of the dependency approach, a new viewpoint on development and social change has come to the forefront. The common starting point here is the examination of the changes from 'bottom-up', from the self-development of the local community. The basic assumption is that there are no countries or communities that function completely autonomously and that are completely self-sufficient, nor are there any nations whose development is exclusively determined by external factors. Every society is dependent in one way or another, both in form and in degree. Thus, a framework was sought within which both the centre and the periphery could be studied separately and in their mutual relationship, both at global, national and local levels.

More attention is also being paid to the content of development, which implies a more normative approach. Another development questions whether 'developed' countries are in fact developed and whether this genre of progress is sustainable or desirable. It favours a multiplicity of approaches based on the context and the basic, felt needs, and the empowerment of the most oppressed sectors of various societies at divergent levels. A main thesis is that change must be structural and occur at multiple levels in order to achieve these ends.

94 | Diffusion versus participatory communication

The above general typology of the so-called development paradigms (for more details, see Servaes, 1999, 2003) can also be found at the communications and culture level. The communication media are, in the context of development, generally used to support development initiatives by the dissemination of messages that encourage the public to support development-oriented projects. Although development strategies in developing countries diverge widely, the usual pattern for broadcasting and the press has been predominantly the same: informing the population about projects, illustrating the advantages of these projects, and recommending that they be supported. A typical example of such a strategy is situated in the area of family planning, where communication means like posters, pamphlets, radio, and television attempt to persuade the public to accept birth control methods. Similar strategies are used on campaigns regarding health and nutrition, agricultural projects, education, and so on.

This model sees the communication process mainly as a message going from a sender to a receiver. This hierarchic view on communication can be summarized in Laswell's classic formula, –'Who says What through Which channel to Whom with What effect?'–, and dates back to (mainly American) research on campaigns and diffusions in the late '40s and '50s.

The American scholar Everett Rogers (1983) is said to be the person who introduced this diffusion theory in the context of development. Modernization is here conceived as a process of diffusion whereby individuals move from a traditional way of life to a different, more technically developed and more rapidly changing way of life. Building primarily on sociological research in agrarian societies, Rogers stressed the adoption and diffusion processes of cultural innovation. This approach is therefore concerned with the *process of diffusion and adoption of innovations* in a more systematic and planned way. Mass media are important in spreading awareness of new possibilities and practices, but at the stage where decisions are being made about whether to adopt or not to adopt, personal communication is far more likely to be influential. Therefore, the general conclusion of this line of thought is that *mass communication is less likely than personal influence to have a direct effect on social behaviour*.

Newer perspectives on development communication claim that this is a limited view of development communication. They argue that this diffusion model is a vertical or one-way perspective on communication, and that development will accelerate mainly through active involvement in the process of the communication itself. Research has shown that, while groups of the public can obtain information from impersonal sources like radio and television, this information has relatively little effect on behavioural changes. And development envisions precisely such change. Similar research has led to the conclusion that more is learned from interpersonal contacts and from mass communication techniques that are based on them. On the lowest level, before people can discuss and resolve problems, they must be informed of the facts, information that the media

provide nationally as well as regionally and locally. At the same time, the public, if the media are sufficiently accessible, can make its information needs known.

Communication theories such as the 'diffusion of innovations', the 'two-step-flow', or the 'extension' approaches are quite congruent with the above modernization theory. The elitist, *vertical or top-down orientation* of the diffusion model is obvious.

The *participatory model*, on the other hand, incorporates the concepts in the framework of multiplicity. It stresses the importance of cultural identity of local communities and of *democratisation and participation at all levels* –international, national, local and individual. It points to a strategy, not merely inclusive of, but largely emanating from, the traditional 'receivers'. Paulo Freire (1983: 76) refers to this as the right of all people to individually and collectively speak their word:

This is not the privilege of some few men, but the right of every (wo)man. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone –nor can he say it for another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words.

In order to share information, knowledge, trust, commitment, and a right attitude in development projects participation is very important in any decision-making process for development. Therefore, the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, chaired by the late Sean MacBride, argued that "this calls for a new attitude for overcoming stereotyped thinking and to promote more understanding of diversity and plurality, with full respect for the dignity and equality of peoples living in different conditions and acting in different ways" (MacBride, 1980: 254). This model stresses reciprocal collaboration throughout all levels of participation.

Also, these newer approaches argue, the *point of departure must be the community*. It is at the community level that the problems of living conditions are discussed, and interactions with other communities are elicited. The most developed form of participation is self-management. This principle implies the right to participation in the planning and production of media content. However, not everyone wants to or must be involved in its practical implementation. More important is that participation is made possible in the decision-making regarding the subjects treated in the messages and regarding the selection procedures. One of the fundamental hindrances to the decision to adopt the participation strategy is that it threatens existing hierarchies. Nevertheless, participation does not imply that there is no longer a role for development specialists, planners, and institutional leaders. It only means that the viewpoint of the local groups of the public is considered before the resources for development projects are allocated and distributed, and that suggestions for changes in the policy are taken into consideration.

Two major approaches to participatory communication

There are two major approaches to participatory communication that everybody today accepts as common sense. The first is the dialogical pedagogy of Paulo

96 | Freire (1970, 1973, 1983, 1994), and the second involves the ideas of access, participation and self-management articulated in the UNESCO debates of the 1970s (Berrigan, 1977, 1979). Every communication project that calls itself participatory accepts these principles of democratic communication. Nonetheless there exists today a wide variety of practical experiences and intentions. Before moving on to explore these differences it is useful to briefly review the common ground.

The *Freirian argument* works by a dual theoretical strategy. He insists that subjugated peoples must be treated as fully human subjects in any political process. This implies dialogical communication. Although inspired to some extent by Sartre's existentialism –a respect for the autonomous personhood of each human being–, the more important source is a theology that demands respect for otherness –in this case that of another human being. The second strategy is a moment of utopian hope derived from the early Marx that the human species has a destiny which is more than life as a fulfilment of material needs. Also from Marx is an insistence on collective solutions. Individual opportunity, Freire stresses, is no solution to general situations of poverty and cultural subjugation.

These ideas are deeply unpopular with elites, including elites in the Third World, but there is nonetheless widespread acceptance of Freire's notion of dialogic communication as a normative theory of participatory communication. One problem with Freire is that his theory of dialogical communication is based on group dialogue rather than such amplifying media as radio, print and television. Freire also gives little attention to the language or form of communication, devoting most of his discussion to the intentions of communication actions.

The second discourse about participatory communication is the UNESCO language about *self-management, access and participation* from the 1977 meeting in Belgrade, the former Yugoslavia. The final report of that meeting defines the terms in the following way.

- » Access refers to the use of media for public service. It may be defined in terms of the opportunities available to the public to choose varied and relevant programs and to have a means of feedback to transmit its reactions and demands to production organizations.
- » Participation implies a higher level of public involvement in communication systems. It includes the involvement of the public in the production process, and also in the management and planning of communication systems.
- » Participation may be no more than representation and consultation of the public in decision-making.
- » On the other hand, self-management is the most advanced form of participation. In this case, the public exercises the power of decision-making within communication enterprises and is also fully involved in the formulation of communication policies and plans.

Access by the community and participation of the community are to be considered key defining factors, as Berrigan eloquently summarizes: “[Community media] are media to which members of the community have access, for information, education, entertainment, when they want access. They are media in which the community participates, as planners, producers, and performers. They are the means of expression of the community, rather than for the community” (Berrigan, 1979: 8). Referring to the 1977 meeting in Belgrade, Berrigan (1979: 18) (partially) links access to the reception of information, education, and entertainment considered relevant by/for the community:

[Access] may be defined in terms of the opportunities available to the public to choose varied and relevant programs, and to have a means of feedback to transmit its reactions and demands to production organizations.

Others limit access to mass media and see it as ‘the processes that permit users to provide relatively open and unedited input to the mass media’ (Lewis, 1993: 12) or as ‘the relation to the public and the established broadcasting institutions’ (Prehn, 1991: 259). Both the production and reception approaches of ‘access’ can be considered relevant for an understanding of ‘community media’.

These ideas are important and widely accepted as a normative theory of participatory communication: it must involve access and participation (Pateman, 1972). However, one should note some differences from Freire. The UNESCO discourse includes the idea of a gradual progression. Some amount of access may be allowed, but self-management may be postponed until some time in the future. Freire’s theory allows for no such compromise. One either respects the culture of the other or falls back into domination and the ‘banking’ mode of imposed education. The UNESCO discourse talks in neutral terms about ‘the public’. Freire talked about ‘the oppressed’. Finally, the UNESCO discourse puts the main focus on the institution. Participatory or community radio means a radio station that is self-managed by those participating in it.

Participatory communication for social change

Participation involves the more equitable sharing of both political and economic power, which often decreases the advantage of certain groups. Structural change involves the redistribution of power. In mass communication areas, many communication experts agree that structural change should occur first in order to establish participatory communication policies. Mowlana and Wilson (1987: 143), for instance, state:

Communications policies are basically derivatives of the political, cultural and economic conditions and institutions under which they operate. They tend to legitimize the existing power relations in society, and therefore, they cannot be substantially changed unless there are fundamental structural changes in society that can alter these power relationships themselves.

98 | Therefore, the development of a participatory communication model has to take place in relation with overall societal emancipation processes at local, national as well as international levels. Several authors have been trying to summarize the criteria for such a communication model. The Latin American scholar Juan Somavia (1977, 1981) sums up the following (slightly adapted) components as essential for it:

- (a) *Communication is a human need*: the satisfaction of the need for communication is just as important for a society as the concern for health, nutrition, housing, education and labour. Together with all the other social needs, communication must enable the citizens to emancipate themselves completely. The right to inform and to be informed, and the right to communicate, are thus essential human rights and this both individually and collectively.
- (b) *Communication is a delegated human right*: within its own cultural, political, economic and historical context, each society has to be able to define independently the concrete form in which it wants to organize its social communication process. Because there are a variety of cultures, there can therefore also arise various organizational structures. But whatever the form in which the social communication function is embodied, priority must be given to the principles of participation and accessibility.
- (c) *Communication is a facet of the societal conscientization, emancipation and liberation process*. The social responsibility of the media in the process of social change is very large. Indeed, after the period of formal education, the media are the most important educational and socialization agents. They are capable of informing or disinforming, exposing or concealing important facts, interpreting events positively or negatively, and so on.
- (d) *The communication task involves rights and responsibilities/obligations*. Since the media in fact provide a public service, they must carry it out in a framework of social and juridical responsibility that reflects the social consensus of the society. In other words, there are no rights without obligation.

The freedom and right to communicate, therefore, must be approached from a threefold perspective: *first*, it is necessary for the public to participate effectively in the communication field; *secondly*, there is the design of a framework in which this can take place; and, *thirdly*, the media must enjoy professional autonomy, free of economic, political or whatever pressure.

In sum, participatory communication for social change sees people as the nucleus of development. Development means lifting up the spirits of a local community to take pride in its own culture, intellect and environment. Development aims to educate and stimulate people to be active in self and communal improvements while maintaining a balanced ecology. Authentic participa-

tion, though widely espoused in the literature, is not in everyone's interest. Due to their local concentration, participatory programmes are, in fact, not easily implemented, nor are they highly predictable or readily controlled.

Different 'types' of participatory communication projects

In spite of the widespread acceptance of the ideas of Freire and UNESCO by development organizations and communication researchers, there is still a very wide range of projects calling themselves 'participatory communication projects'. There is an evident need for clarification in descriptive and normative theories of participatory media. What does it mean to be participatory? It is necessary to make further distinctions and arguments to deal with a wide variety of actually existing experiences and political intentions.

A review of the literature turns up the following *types* (Berrigan, 1979; Berque, Foy and Girard, 1993; Fraser and Restrepo, 2000; Girard, 1992; Lewis, 1993; O'Connor, 1988; O'Sullivan, 1979):

- (1) participatory media are internally organized on democratic lines (as worker co-operatives or collectives);
- (2) participatory media are recognized by their opposition to cultural industries dominated by multinational corporations;
- (3) participatory media may be traced to the liberation of linguistic and ethnic groups following a major social transformation;
- (4) the strong existence of participatory media may be explained in terms of class struggle within the society;
- (5) participatory media may be identified as "molecular" rather than "molar" (a collectivity of individual autonomous units rather than one that is homogenized and one-dimensional);
- (6) participatory media (like the montage of Eisenstein and the theatre of Brecht) by design requires a creative and varied reception from its audience.

Reyes Matta (1986) argues that participatory communication is first and foremost an alternative to media dominated by transnational corporations. This is the context in which any alternative must operate. To succeed is to have won against the culture industries that are dominated by multinational corporations. The line of thought developed by CINCO (1987) is a development of this because it involves above all a structural analysis of communicative institutions. For the CINCO researchers media are alternative if they have a democratic institutional structure. Here the issue is one of ownership and control that is external to the community against access and participation in the media organization.

Legitimacy and political credibility can be fostered by the establishment of what is called *participatory democracy*, the building in of actual participation from the public. This is only possible when the communication system is decentral-

100 | ized. The control over communication and information may not be monopolized by one or a few segments of the society. Unfortunately, most of the time structural aspects stand in the way of the ideal of democracy. In most developing countries, the first stone for bridging the gap between the ruling elite and the masses has still to be laid. For the establishment of participatory democracy, therefore, dialogue must be made possible between the authorities and the public, nationally, regionally, and locally. In the political sector, this can be done through political parties, pressure groups, civil action groups, environmental movements, and the like. Thus political credibility as well as social and cultural identity of the population and an awareness and support of the development goals are needed.

The concept of Community Media (CM) has shown to be, in its long theoretical and empirical tradition, highly elusive. The multiplicity of media organizations that carry this name has caused most mono-theoretical approaches to focus on certain characteristics, while ignoring other aspects of the identity of community media. This theoretical problem necessitates the use of different approaches towards the definition of community media (Table 1), which will allow for a complementary emphasis on different aspects of the identity of community media (for an elaboration, see Carpentier, Lie and Servaes, 1991). For a more elaborate description of the different domains of alternative/participatory media, see Lewis (1993: 12).

Table 1: Positioning the four theoretical approaches on Community Media (CM)

	Media-centred	Society-centred
Autonomous identity of CM (essentialist)	Approach I: Serving the community	Approach III: Part of civil society
Identity of CM in relation to other identities (relationalist)	Approach II: An alternative to mainstream	Approach IV: Rhizome

By way of summary

The above-described changes in the field of communication for development could be summarized as follows.

1. The growth of a deeper understanding of the nature of communication

The perspective on communication has changed. Early models in the '50s and '60s saw the communication process simply as a message going from a sender to a receiver (that is, Laswell's classic S-M-R model). The emphasis was mainly sender- and media-centric; the stress laid on the freedom of the press, the absence of censorship, and so on. Since the '70s, communication has become more receiver- and message-centric.

The emphasis now is more on the process of communication (that is, the exchange of meaning) and on the significance of this process (that is, the social relationships created by communication and the social institutions and con-

text which result from such relationships). As a result, the focus has moved from a 'communicator' to a more 'receiver-centric' orientation, with the resultant *emphasis on meaning sought and ascribed rather than information transmitted*.

2. A new understanding of communication as a two-way process

With this shift in focus, one is no longer attempting to create a need for the information one is disseminating, but one is rather *disseminating information for which there is a need*. The emphasis is on information exchange rather than on the persuasion in the diffusion model.

The 'oligarchic' view of communication implied that freedom of information was a one-way right from a higher to a lower level, from the centre to the periphery, from an institution to an individual, from a communication-rich nation to a communication-poor one, and so on. Today, the interactive nature of communication is increasingly recognized. It is seen as fundamentally two-way rather than one-way, interactive and participatory rather than linear.

3. A new understanding of culture

The cultural perspective has become central to the debate on communication for development. Culture is not only the visible, non-natural environment of a person, but primarily his/her normative context. Consequently, one has moved away from a more traditional mechanistic approach that emphasized economic and materialistic criteria to a more *multiple appreciation of holistic and complex perspectives*.

4. The trend towards participatory democracy

The end of the colonial era has seen the rise of many independent states and the spread of democratic principles, even if only at the level of lip service. Though often ignored in practice, democracy is honoured in theory. Governments and/or powerful private interests still largely control the world's communication media, but they are more attuned to and aware of the democratic ideals than previously. At the same time, literacy levels have increased, and there has been a remarkable improvement in people's ability to handle and use communication technology. As a consequence, *more and more people can use communication media and can no longer be denied access to and participation in communication processes for the lack of communication and technical skills*.

5. Recognition of the imbalance in communication resources or the digital divide

The disparity in communication resources between different parts of the world is increasingly recognized as a cause of concern. As the centre nations develop their resources, the gap between centre and periphery becomes greater. *The plea for a more balanced and equal distribution of communication resources can only be discussed in terms of power at local, national and international levels*. The

102 | attempt by local power-elites to totally control the modern communication channels –press, broadcasting, education, and bureaucracy– does no longer ensure control of all the communication networks in a given society. Nor does control of the mass media ensure support for the controlling forces, nor for any mobilization around their objectives, nor for the effective repression of opposition.

Some may argue that thanks to the new ICTs, especially the Internet and www, one has to re-address the debate on the digital divide; however, others remain sceptical and less optimistic.

6. The growing sense of globalization and cultural hybridity

Perhaps the greatest impetus towards a new formulation of communication freedoms and the need for realistic communication policies and planning have come from the realization that the international flow of communication has become the main carrier of cultural globalization. This cultural hybridity can take place without perceptible dependent relationships.

7. A new understanding of what is happening within the boundaries of the nation-state

One has to accept that “internal” and “external” factors inhibiting development do not exist independently of each other. Thus, in order to understand and develop a proper strategy one must have an understanding of the class relationships of any particular peripheral social formation and the ways in which these structures articulate with the centre on the one hand, and the producing classes in the Third World on the other. To dismiss Third World ruling classes, for example, as mere puppets whose interests are always mechanically synonymous with those of the centre, is to ignore the realities of a much more complex relationship. The very unevenness and contradictory nature of the capitalist development process necessarily produces a *constantly changing relationship*.

8. Recognition of the ‘impact’ of communication technology

Some communication systems (e.g., audio- and video-taping, copying, radio broadcasting, and especially the Internet) have become *cheap* and so simple that the rationale for regulating and controlling them centrally, as well as the ability to do so, is no longer relevant. However, other systems (for instance, satellites, remote sensing, trans-border data flows) remain *very expensive*. They are beyond the means of smaller countries and ‘have-nots’. Moreover, they may not be ‘suitable’ to local environments.

9. From an information society to knowledge societies

Information has been seen as the leading growth sector in society, especially in advanced industrial economies. Its three strands –computing, telecommunications and broadcasting– have evolved historically as three separate sectors, and by means of digitization these sectors are now converging.

Throughout the past decade a gradual shift can be observed away from a technological in favour of more socio-economic and cultural definitions of the Information Society. The term Knowledge Societies (in plural as there are many roads) better coins this shift in emphasis from ICTs as 'drivers' of change to a perspective where these technologies are regarded as tools which may provide a new potential for combining the information embedded in ICT systems with the creative potential and knowledge embodied in people: "These technologies do not create the transformations in society by themselves; they are designed and implemented by people in their social, economic, and technological contexts" (Mansell & When, 1998: 12).

True knowledge is more than information. Knowledge is the sense or meaning that people make of information. *Meaning is not something that is delivered to people, people create/interpret it themselves.* If knowledge is to be effectively employed to help people, it needs to be interpreted and evaluated by those it is designed to help. That requires people to have access to information on the issues that affect their lives, and the capacity to make their own contributions to policy-making processes. Understanding the context in which knowledge moves –factors of control, selection, purpose, power, and capacity– is essential for understanding how societies can become better able to learn, generate and act on knowledge.

10. A new understanding towards integration of distinct means of communication

Modern mass media and alternate or parallel networks of folk media or interpersonal communication channels are not mutually exclusive by definition. Contrary to the beliefs of diffusion theorists, they are *more effective if appropriately used in an integrated fashion, according to the needs and constraints of the local context.* The modern mass media, having been mechanically transplanted from abroad into Third World societies, enjoy varying and limited rates of penetration. They are seldom truly integrated into institutional structures, as occurs in some Western societies. However, they can be effectively combined, provided a functional division of labour is established between them, and provided the limits of the communication media are recognized.

11. The recognition of dualistic or parallel communication structures

No longer governments or rulers are able to operate effectively, to control, censor, or to play the role of gatekeeper with regard to all communications networks at all times in a given society. Both alternate and parallel networks, which may not always be active, often function through political, socio-cultural, religious or class structures or can be based upon secular, cultural, artistic, or folkloric channels. These networks feature a highly participatory character, high rates of credibility, and a strong organic integration with other institutions deeply rooted in a given society.