

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN DEVELOPMENT: Lessons Learned from a Critique of the Dominant, Dependency, and Alternative Paradigms

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Communication can be an instrument of power, a revolutionary weapon, a commercial product, or a means of education: It can serve the ends of either liberation or of oppression, of either the growth of the individual personality or of drilling human beings into uniformity (MacBride et. al., 1980).

During the past four decades, the field of communication and development has been periodically reviewed, analysed, and evaluated by scholars (for example, Lerner & Schramm, 1976; Schramm and Lerner, 1976; Rogers, 1976/89; Hornik, 1988; Kumar, 1988/89; Stevenson, 1988; Melkote, 1991; Servaes, 1991; Singhal and Domatob, 1993 and others). Three major paradigms have emerged in the past four decades of scholarship on the role of communication in development. The dominant paradigm, the dependency paradigm and the alternative paradigm. The present article traces the historical emergence of each of these paradigms and compares and contrasts the role accorded to communication in each of these models of development. The major lessons learned in the past four decades about the role of communication in national development are summarised.

Self-determination is an important characteristic of development. People's participation in their own empowerment is critical to foster a sense of dignity and self-reliance. Small and short-term projects may work better than long-term and big projects. Also projects that begin small and then expand carefully have better chances of success. 9

The Rise of the Dominant Paradigm

The dominant paradigm of development, often referred to as the modernisation paradigm, involved in Western industrialised countries

after World War II (Melkote, 1991; Rogers 1976; Servaes, 1991). In this perspective, development was viewed as a type of social change in which new ideas were to be introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per capita incomes and higher levels of living through more modern production methods and improved social organisation (Rogers and Svenning, 1969). A number of historical factors led to the emergence of the modernisation perspective:

- *Industrialisation and economic growth in the Western nations* (Rogers, 1976; Singhal and Rogers, 1989; Melkote, 1991). After becoming industrialised, the US and Western European nations experienced rapid economic growth, urbanisation, and technological advancement (Rogers, 1976). Scholars in these nations perceived economic growth as development and saw industrialisation as a pathway to development (Kumar, 1988/89). Transfer of modern technology from Western nations to developing countries was viewed as being important to development (Rogers, 1976).

- *The success of the Marshall Plan in Europe after World War II* (Singhal and Rogers, 1989). The Marshall Plan was designed to build post World War II Europe. With financial and material support from the Marshall Plan, mainly provided by the United States, Western European countries reconstructed their economies, and attained high economic growth during the post war period. This led the United States and the United Nations to believe that such spectacular outcomes could also be achieved in developing countries, if adequate development aid was provided.

- *The emergence of the newly-independent nations*. During the post World War II period, many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America gained independence from colonial rule. These new nations, in general, viewed the centralised system of government, careful economic planning, and developed system of bureaucracies of Western nations as an effective model of development (So, 1990).

- *The spread of communist political ideology*. After World War II, the USSR extended its communist ideology to Eastern European countries, China, Cuba and North Korea. The United States government, a democratic/capitalist superpower, became preoccupied with the idea of protecting the rest of the world from the expansion of communism (So, 1990). US politicians and policymakers provided encouragement to US social scientists to study social problems in developing nations in order to promote an agenda of economic development as well as to establish the predominance of democratic ideology (Chirof, 1981; Kumar, 1988/89).

- *The liberal/capitalistic thinking in the West*. The modernisation perspective was strongly influenced by Darwinian evolutionary theory, functionalist theory, and Max Weber's theories of social and economic change. Evolutionary theory accounted for the state of economic growth in each society (Rostow, 1960; Comte, 1964), noted that evolutionary theorists viewed human society as moving from

primitive to advances stages in a unidirectional, irreversible and evolutionary process. At the final stage, each society would enjoy progress, humanity and civilization.

Functionalist theory accounted for the systematic variables underlying traditional and advanced societies (Parsons, 1951). Parsons approach to functionalist theory viewed human society as a biological organisation that consisted of different institutions. In order to maintain homeostatic equilibrium, if one institution experienced change, the rest of the society must also experience change. The "trickle-down" approach to development was derived from this perspective.

Weber's theories of social and economic change emphasised that economic development occurred through industrialisation, imported capital intensive technology and centralised planning (Mowlana and Wilson, 1990). The local elites played an important role in this process.

The *outgrowth of quantifiable research in social sciences*. Most Western scholars in the 1950s and 1960s employed a positivism/empirical approach to study social problems in developing countries. They believed that development was a universal, neutral, and measurable process. Based on this philosophy, development lessons from one nation were taken to be generalisable for other nations. Measurements of development was dependent on such quantifiable, numerical indices as Gross National Product (GNP) and per capita income (Rogers, 1976).

In sum, modernisation scholars identified societies as being traditional or modern (Servaes, 1991). Traditional societies were in a general state of underdevelopment and poverty, which modern societies were industrialised, materialistic and democratic (Stevenson, 1988). The uni-directional, progressive, and irreversible nature of development process implied that the movement of a traditional society to a more advanced stage helped to narrow the gap between the modern and traditional societies (Servaes, 1991). Modern societies could assist traditional societies to develop by transferring their technology and socio-political systems.

According to the dominant paradigm, the aim of development was to become like a Western-type society with democratic elections, universal suffrage and popular representation; free markets, individualism, freedom of speech and pluralism; institutionalised competition between parties and interests; and orderly, peaceful, socially integrated, fair and legitimate participation (McQuail, 1994). Every developing nation was aspire to these characteristics of a "developed" society.

In the dominant paradigm, barriers to development were not just external to the society, but also internal to it. Explanations for the causes of underdevelopment included traditional ways of thinking, illiteracy and outdated social norms (Rogers, 1976; Servaes, 1991). In

order to move such societies from a traditional to a modern stage, traditional individuals had to be modernised (McClelland, 1951; Hagen, 1962).

The role of communication in the dominant paradigm

Early scholars perceived the role of communication in development from a positivist/empirical viewpoint (Mowlana and Wilson, 1990; Servaes, 1991). They perceived the communication process as occurring in a linear, cause-effect-oriented model. Rogers (1986), argued that the unidirectional information theory model proposed by Shannon and Weaver in 1949 led communication scholars in this "misguided" direction.

Daniel Lerner, Wilbur Schramm and Everett M Rogers were the most influential proponents of the modernisation perspective among communication scholars. Lerner's (1958), influential book, *The Passing of the Traditional Society*, helped to establish a communication perspective in development. Lerner argued that social change from a traditional to modern society was inevitable and unidirectional. He posited that traditional individuals must possess *verstehen*, "empathic understanding", which helps them identify with the "modern" man. He identified mass media exposure, urbanisation, literacy, higher per capita income and political participation as the main variables accounting for development. He argue that the mass media had a magic multiplying power since they were both the socialising agent and the index of social change. The mass media system, according to Lerner, reinforced an accelerated social change by disseminating new ideas and attitudes related to development.

Everett M Rogers (1962), on the other hand, was more concerned about social change that occurred when new ideas (commonly referred to as innovations) were adopted in a social system. His influential book, *Diffusion of Innovations*, argued the importance of the two-step flow of communication in development: From the mass media to opinion leaders (local influential in a community), and then through the opinion leaders' interpersonal channels to the public. Mass media, according to Rogers, had a role in spreading informative and persuasive messages from the development agency to the public, while interpersonal channels influenced the public to adopt or reject the new development practices. Unfortunately, the two-step flow model also headed development scholars to embrace the notion of centralised-planning, and fostered a top-down and hierarchical approach to communication.

Wilbur Schramm (1964), in his influential book *Mass Media and National Development*, emphasised the role of mass media as an agent for social change in developing countries. Social change was viewed mainly as a top-down and uni-directional process. Schramm posited that social change occurred as a result of aggregate changes in

individuals. In order to encourage development, national governments needed to utilise communication to motivate people to change. Schramm's ideas led to an over-optimistic view of the role of mass communication in development.

In sum, communication scholars following the dominant paradigm believed mainly in a one-way flow of information and a top-down approach to development. Mass Media were considered as "magic multipliers" i.e., major vehicles for disseminating information to a diverse public within a short period of time. The dominant paradigm fitted well with the major trends in the 1950s and 1960s: (1) developing countries during this time enjoyed generous funding from the international and non-governmental aid agencies; (2) the leaders of developing countries welcome the modernisation perspective since they saw economic development as their top priority; (3) through centralised planning, leaders in developing countries could be assured that the public was under their control; and (4) the expansion of mass media helped national governments to spread development information and political propaganda to the public.

Criticisms of the dominant paradigm

Research on communication and development under the dominant paradigm came under severe criticism. Major criticisms centered around (1) its ethnocentric nature; (2) placing internal blame for underdevelopment; (3) the negative consequences of "modernity"; (4) the failure of the top-down, one-way and "big" project approach; and (5) inattention to message content (Melkote, 1991; Mowlana and Wilson, 1990; Rogers, 1976; Singhal and Rogers, 1989; Servaes, 1991).

The modernisation perspective has been criticised for its ethnocentric nature. Mowlana and Wilson (1990) described the modernisation perspective as an attempt by Western nations to spread their liberal and capitalist ideology to developing countries. For example, early scholars linked the concept of modernisation to Westernisation, defining political participation (an aspect of democratic ideology) as an indicator of modernisation. Rogers (1976) noted that many economists believed that their development theories had universal validity. These scholars did not adequately realise that the less developed countries has different contexts and experiences than the so-called "developed" nations (Singhal and Rogers, 1989).

The modernisation approach blamed the internal factors of developing countries such as social norms, values and religion as hindrance to development (Melkote, 1991; Rogers, 1976; Singhal and Rogers, 1989). This viewpoint was criticised for ignoring such external factors that obstruct development as the economic dependency of the international aid programmes on the multinational corporations and

during the 1970s, many developed and developing countries that

attempted to modernise faced problems caused by rapid industrialisation. Environmental pollution, overpopulation, crowding in big cities, unemployment, and the widening gap between the rich and poor were some of them (Melkote, 1991; Rogers, 1976). Scholars began to question what the aim of development should be: Economic development for a few, or a better quality of life for the poor people (Rogers, 1976).

Unsuccessful development projects in developing countries also reflected the failure of the dominant paradigm. Big, long-term projects, and the top-down approach often did not work well in developing countries (Rota and Sood, 1994). In addition, centralised planning projects, usually designed by economists and bankers, did not fit well with national needs, and were failures.

Communication scholars who utilised the modernisation perspective tended to ignore or pay little attention to the contents of the mass media (Melkote, 1991). Exposure to the mass media was misconstrued as an indicator of development. Now there is a growing realisation that the qualitative content of the mass media (i.e., its pro-social/anti-social nature) is very important (Golding, 1974; Mody, 1991; Singhal and Rogers, 1989). There is a growing emphasis on the careful design of media messages based on a systematic need assessment of the target audiences, and also a call to create participatory messages in collaboration with the target beneficiaries.

The Rise of the Dependency Paradigm

The dependency paradigm evolved in the developing countries in the 1960s as an antithesis to the modernisation perspective (Servaes, 1991). Dependency was viewed as "the conditioning situation in which the economies of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others" (Servaes, 1989). The dependency perspective viewed development from a developing country's viewpoint (So, 1990), defining it as "self-reliance, non-alignment and the building of a New World Economic and Information Order" (Kumar, 1988/89). The proponents of dependency theory viewed the process of development under the modernisation perspective as a "continuation" of the old colonial type. Thus, they called for developing countries to rally on their own processes of development, while maintaining economic development as their goal (Servaes, 1989).

So (1990) noted that the dependency school first appeared in Latin America in the early 1960s as a response to the failed programmes of the UN Economic Communication for Latin America (ECLA). The dependency perspective then gained momentum in the United States as a response to the decline of the modernisation perspective (Servaes, 1989) credited the US-based Paul Baran (1957) as founding the

dependency perspective; he was the first to posit that development and underdevelopment were highly interrelated.

The dependency paradigm derived its theoretical tradition from Neo-Marxism and structuralism. Neo-Marxists advanced the dependency paradigm, focusing on the developing countries' indictments of imperialism in the development process (So, 1990). In addition, Neo-Marxists encouraged the proponents of the dependency paradigm to more closely look at the socialist development of China and Cuba (So, 1990). Structuralism referred to the degree to which the world system's infrastructure impeded or promoted development in developing countries (Mowlana and Wilson, 1990).

Advocates of the dependency paradigm are very diverse and include social scientists from many disciplines, countries, ideologies and political commitments (So, 1990). Advocates of the dependency paradigm perceive the state of dependency as an external condition that obstructs the national development objectives of the developing countries. They assert that the state of dependency is a result of the flow of economic surplus from developing countries to the developed Western countries. They also emphasised that dependency is incompatible with development (Blomstrom and Hetne, 1984). The prescription: Each developing country should disassociate itself from the world market that is controlled by developed nations, and seek to achieve self-reliance (Servaes, 1989).

The role of communication in the dependency perspective

Two main schools of thought exist about the role of communication in development from the dependency perspective: The culturalist and the political economy viewpoint (Servaes, 1991). The major interest of these scholars is to investigate the issue of equality and identify the factors that create the inequality, especially in terms of communication, between the industrialised nations and the developing countries.

Communication scholars like Tunstall, (1977) and Varis, (1985) identify themselves as the culturalists; they seek to interpret culture, communication and ideology. Their work documents the imbalance in information flow in a global perspective. However, their research is mostly characterised by quantitative and objective methodologies, showing how much information is exchanged in the world, reporting the unbalanced flow of information between the North and the South, and explaining why, for instance, intra-regional, and intra-national communication is limited in developing countries.

On the other hand, communication scholars using a political economy approach, such as Schiller, (1969/81) look at the political and economic accounts in which communication and culture exist among other factors of domination. Schiller, (1981) argued that the existing global communication order reflects an imbalance of global

power that needs to be corrected.

The work of such communication scholars indicated that the developing countries depend on the developed nations for both economic and media inputs. Boyd-Barrett, (1982) for example, argued that the United States, as the leader in television and radio broadcasting in the 1970s, became the model for the rest of the world's programme standards. Varis, (1985) content analysis reported that most of the world's television programming flowed in a one-way direction from Western nations to the rest of the world. Standard values disseminated to non-Western nations, the diffusing of occupational ideologies, and the export of media products, are viewed as ways in which the Western media dominate the markets in developing countries (Servaes, 1989).

According to the dependency paradigm, in order to attain an advanced level of development, developing countries must separate themselves from Western countries. They should be aware of the Western values that come with the Western concept of development. At the international level in such forums as UNESCO, ITU etc., representatives from developing countries attempted to challenge Western countries by asking for a more balanced flow of information in and out of their borders (MacBride et. al., 1980). They also asked for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), along with the New World Economic Order (NWEEO), to increase their share of information products and to enhance economic equality between the developed and developing nations. The premises behind the call for a NWICO was that developing countries could develop on their own if they were independent, and if Western countries did not dominate their political, economic, and socio-cultural ideology and values.

Criticisms of the dependency paradigm

The dependency perspective, offered as an alternative to the modernisation perspective, was criticised for its overconcentration on external factors that cause underdevelopment, and for overlooking a nation's internal causes of development (Servaes, 1989). Dependency theorists failed to adequately address a number of development problems that occur at the national and local levels, including inequality between social classes, corruption among elites of the developing countries, and the failure of development projects planned and undertaken by the national governments themselves.

Most work produced by proponents of the dependency perspective is only critical of, or a challenge to, the modernisation perspective. Servaes, (1989) argued that the primary difference between the dependency perspective and the modernisation perspective is minimal when it comes to the content of development. Both perspectives are concerned with economic development as their top priority and use

the same quantitative methods approach to analysing the issues of development and underdevelopment.

The Rise of the Alternative Paradigm

The alternative paradigm, also called the pluralist perspective, or "multiplicity-in-one-world" perspective, emerged in the mid-1970s as an alternative to the dominant paradigm (Hedebro, 1982; Melkote, 1991; Rogers, 1976; Servaes, 1989). The following major historical events led to the emergence of the alternative perspective: (1) the civil rights, peace, environmental and feminist movements in the industrialised countries, (2) the liberalising movements in the communist countries, and (3) the national liberalising movements in the developing country. These historical events, although occurring in different countries with differing political ideologies, shared common concerns, especially freedom and equality among the public (Tehrani, 1990). In addition, the growth of the humanistic/interpretive and cultural approach to social sciences, and the lessons learned from earlier development projects encouraged scholars to reconsider the role of communication in development.

Development, in this alternative perspective, was more generally defined as "a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment" (Rogers, 1976). In this and other such definitions, the term "development" tends to be broader in scope, less directed in its goals, and smaller in its programme size, when compared to the days of the dominant paradigm. The alternative perspective tends to be more humanistic, normative (Servaes, 1991) and pluralistic (Singhal and Rogers, 1989). Its scope is less economic-development-oriented and more social-oriented; it rejects the concept of the universality of the development concept and economic-based perspectives. Advocates believe that the concept of development cannot be generalised or universalised. Each society, region, or group should identify its own pathway to development (Melkote, 1991; Singhal and Rogers, 1989). Nations should rethink their needs, goals and measures of development. Development projects should be designed in the form of small manageable projects which suit popular needs. Instead of defining increased GNP (Gross National Product) as the universal goal of development, in the economic sense, the new paradigm ought to improve the quality of people's life as the primary goal of development (Rogers, 1976).

The alternative perspective analyses the problems of development at different levels, including international, national and local levels. For example, at the international level, proponents accept that it is

impossible for a country to be completely autonomous and totally self-reliant while pursuing its own development (Kumar, 1988/89; Servaes, 1991). Like a global village, every country is "interdependent" on one another (Servaes, 1989).

At the national level, there is no universal model for successful development (Kumar, 1988/89; Singhal and Rogers, 1989). National development, according to the alternative perspective, should be multidimensional and based on a dialectic process that is suited to the needs of the public (Kumar, 1988/89; Servaes, 1991). It is the responsibility of each country or region to define its own development goals and the strategies through which it will pursue those goals. At the local level, development should bring about "quality", "equality" and "balance" in the system.

Although the alternative paradigm's approach to development is diverse, the following principles are common:

- Development should be "need-oriented." Development projects should be based on the material and non-material needs of the majority of the population (Hedebro, 1982; Kumar, 1988/89; Rogers, 1976; Servaes, 1988/91).
- Development should be endogenous. Development projects should stem from the heart of the society, and express the creativity and equality of its people (Servaes, 1991).
- Development should promote popular participation at all levels. Development project should be conducted by the people for the people (Jamieson, 1991; Rogers, 1976; Servaes, 1991).
- Development should promote the society's self-reliance or dignity (Galtung, 1980; Rogers, 1976; Servaes, 1991). Each society that conducts development projects should rely on its own strengths and resources.
- Development should promote equal access. Development projects should promote equal access to development and natural resources, and be sensitive to local ecological system (Servaes, 1991).
- Local culture, values and norms should adequately be considered in the process of development. Cultures, values and norms provide the context for development (Wang and Dissanayake, 1984). The ideal development programme should integrate both traditional and modern systems (Rogers, 1976).

The role of communication in the alternative paradigm

The role of communication in development depends on the way the term "development" is defined (Singhal and Rogers, 1989). Since national GNP and other quantitative measures of economic growth are not the top priority of development in the alternative paradigm, it rejects the dominant view of communication, including top-down, one-way and centralised approaches. The alternative perspective instead uses communication in different ways. This new approach favours

multiplicity, smallness of scale, locality, deinstitutionalisation, interchange of sender-receiver roles, horizontality of communication at all levels of society and interaction (McQuail, 1983).

In the alternative approach, which is also sometimes known as "development support communication", "community development," or "another development," the main emphasis is placed on two-way interactive and participatory communication (Jacobson, 1989). At the national level, the government moves from being initiator of development programmes to be the "facilitator" or "co-facilitator", answering locally initiated requests, feeding local groups with information, and disseminating innovations that serve the needs of the public (Roger, 1995).

At the local level, the concept of "self-development" is promoted (Rogers, 1976). The public is "empowered" by being encouraged to get involved in development programmes, think about their rights and duties, to share ideas about problems in the local community, and about ways to solve them (Melkote, 1991). The public is made to feel that they belong to the development programmes, and are thus motivated to voluntarily join them and maintain them.

The role of communication research and the role of media in the alternative paradigm has also changed. In terms of communication research, the alternative perspective tends to focus on problem-solving and on qualitative research methods. In terms of media, according to the alternative perspective both mass media and folk media need to be used together to satisfy people's communication needs. In general, the mass media and the folk media play a facilitator role; they provide information about development and circulate information among diverse cultural groups (Melkote, 1991; Rogers, 1976). In this way, the public has a chance to rapidly obtain information, and are proud of their cultural heritage.

In sum, the role of communication in the alternative paradigm seems to be more diverse than it is in the two previously discussed paradigms. The role of communication in this perspective is at the level of interpersonal, mass and folk channels, communication helps "empower" the public to think, to decide and to implement its development programmes. In addition, communication helps promote equity among the public, the decentralisation of the development programmes, and the integration of old and new ideas of development. Furthermore, the communication process is two-way.

Criticism of the alternative paradigm

The alternative paradigm has been criticised for its "utopian ideology" (Servaes, 1991). The concept of the alternative perspective seems to be of little relevance to policy makers and the planners. It seems to be pluralistic in the way it approaches, defines and implements development projects. However, its Western origins in

its advocacy of participation are clearly observable. This perspective promotes a liberal approach to development and also believes in the concept of individualism. Major questions which remain to be answered include: To what extent does the public in developing countries understand and interpret the concept of popular participation? And do they share the same perceptions with the Western concept of popular participation?

Lessons Learned from Critiquing the Three Development Paradigms

Several lessons can be derived from our critique of communication and development in the three paradigms: Dominant, dependency and alternative. These include:

1. The development issue is complex. The issue of development and communication is complex (Rogers, 1989). Development occurs in the political, economic, social, cultural and historical environment, which makes the development problems and needs in one country different from those in others. Unlike other fields of communication, which seek to understand the nature of human communication or communication effects, development communication uses communication in a more practical way: It attempts to use communication to manipulate the "so-called" social change.
2. There is no real meaning of the word "development". These three paradigms - dominant, dependency and alternative are attempts by scholars to identify the problems of development and to suggest solutions. Each paradigm represents a different approach to understanding the role of communication in development. However, each paradigm has its strengths and limitations. The dominant paradigm, for example, was criticised for its ethnocentric nature; its top-down, one-way approach; and its unreliable definition of development (Servaes, 1991). The dependency paradigm was criticised for its ignorance of causes of underdevelopment from the national and local levels, such as the corruption among elites (Servaes, 1991). The alternative paradigm was questioned for its "utopian ideology" (Servaes, 1991).
3. People are the real cause of the world development's problem. One of the most difficult things to understand is the human mind. In different eras and places, people have interpreted the term "development" differently. What was once called development in China, India, or Egypt is now an artifact of an old civilization. Concepts of development change all the time. One of the main influences on the human perception about development is "power". Those who hold power identify themselves with their possessions; to them, that is development. They think that they are developed and seek to encourage or force others to do likewise. In addition,

they also seek to eliminate other perceptions of "development". Western attempts in the post World War II period support this argument. Following World War II, Western countries sought to spread their concept of development to developing countries. They encouraged developing nations to pursue development along the lines of Western ideas, and trying to stop the influence of the communist camp which also claimed that it wanted to reconstruct the devastated Eastern European countries after the war.

4. Communication is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for development. The role of communication in development can be at the level of interpersonal, mass and folk channels. Communication plays a role in development when people begin to think about social change, exchange idea of development with others; and disseminate development strategies to other people via available communication channels. If there is no communication, the idea of development can not grow beyond its point of origin. The dominant paradigm emphasised the role of mass communication in this process, while the alternative paradigm placed the role of communication at the intra/interpersonal channel. However, by the same token, communication can decrease the potential for development. Communication can confuse the public about the best ways to pursue development. While communication is important for development, we should recognise that not every development problem is communication related. Communication can solve only those problem that need communication inputs (Windahl, Signitzer and Olson, 1992).

5. There is no universal way to solve the problem of development or underdevelopment. The failure of the Western countries to solve the development problem in developing countries by transferring their development model shows that there is no one way to solve development problems. Local problems often need local solutions. Neither dependent or independent strategies are the way to solve the problems of development. The criticisms of the dominant and the dependent paradigms indicate that each nation must seek its own path to development, either by depending on assistance from other nations, or by being independent. The advancement of communication technology has led to global interdependence. McLuhan's "global village" is here to stay.

Conclusions

From our critique of the three paradigms of development, we gather that the development of every person, group, or nation is unique. Thus, it is possible for less developed countries to plot their own unique paths to development. Those who have 'power' to manipulate communication to reach development goals should use it ethically

(Papa, Auwal and Singhal, 1995). They should be concerned about social development in terms of people's quality of life, especially of the socio-economically disadvantaged.

One of the main problems that plagues developing countries is that Western countries and international organisations seek to motivate them around the concept of development and suggest different ways to pursue development. The generation of three paradigms in a few decades supports this point. Developing countries need to find their own way to development, by using Lerner's (1958) concept of empathy in somewhat different way: Understanding the problems of others before solving them.

Self-determination is an important characteristic of development. People's participation in their own empowerment is critical to foster a sense of dignity and self-reliance. Small and short-term projects may work better than long-term and big projects. Also projects that begin small and then expand carefully have better chances of success. The Grameen (Rural) Bank in Bangladesh, which has empowered over two million poor families, is a case in point (Auwal and Singhal, 1991; Papa, Auwal and Singhal, 1995). Action-based research project (like Grameen Bank) tend to be more controllable, measurable and more sustainable.

As we complete four decades of scholarship on communication and development, the key development question still remains large: Development for whom and with what purpose? The dominant, dependency, and alternative paradigms have provided some answers to this question, and in doing so raised many other questions. Will all the questions ever be answered?

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