COMMUNICATION & CITIZENSHIP

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

Papers and Audio-Visual Presentations, prepared for Session 5 of the Research Committee Nr. 14 on Communication, Knowledge and Culture, Mexico City, August 18,'82

WORLD CONGRESS OF SOCIOLOGY 1982

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Date
Your reference
Our reference
Subject

Utrecht, July 27 1982

Dear Colleagues:

I am enclosing the program for Session 5 on "Communication and Citizenship, Theory and Practice of Participatory Communication", along with some further information about the contributions in the session.

Unfortunately quite a few participants who had agreed to come to Mexico have informed me that, due to budget cuts and general tightness of travel funds they have had to withdraw themselves from the program. Of some of the participants it is still uncertain whether they will be able to come to Mexico or not.

Fortunately many of us, who are working with audio-visual media can send videotapes or films and thus be present, without really being there.

The three papers and the summary descriptions of practical experiences have been put together in a little booklet, which is now at the printers and will hopefully be available at the World Congress for distribution at the session. The materials you are now receiving are only a fraction of the 105 pages of the booklet.

I hope that everybody who has announced to come will in fact be able to come, or otherwise send some audio-visual materials to be presented at the session. The best way to send these materials is to give them to a colleague from your country who should carry your videotape or film as personal luggage, and give it to me upon arrival in Mexico. People can contact me at the Edifício San Ildefonso, room "El Generalito". Otherwise they should try to contact me through the registration office of the congress. The telephone in Mexico City is ..52-5-573.8122 X 2039, or 655.1344 X 2039.

The best way to dispatch audio-visual materials to Mexico is to send them through the diplomatic courrier. Please advise your Embassy to forward the AV materials from your Embassy in Mexico City to the Embassy of The Netherlands: Embajada de los Paises Bajos, Dept. de Prensa y Relaciones Culturales, Edificio COMERMEX, Boulevard M.A. Camacho 1, Mexico, D.F., Mexico. Telephone: ..52-5-557.9588. In order to follow this route you have to contact your Ministry of Foreign Affairs in your capital.

I will be leaving from Holland on August 9 (after a week of vacation, but I will pick up mail at the Institute on August 9). I can be reached in Mexico from the 10th of August at the following address: c/o Sylvia Molina, Callejon de Cruz Verde 10.000 Mexico D.F., Mexico.

Looking forward to see you in Mexico,

Leonard M. Henny

PROGRAM:

COMMUNICATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Theory and Practice of Participatory Communication

Theory, First World:

David L. Paletzt, Department of Political Science, Duke University, Durham, USA
"Political Communication and the role of the Mass Media in Political Participation" (paper)

Leonard M. Henny, Sociological Institute, University of Utrecht, Netherlands:
"Alternative Media, Participatory Communication and Counter-Ideology" (paper)

Practice First World:

Deborah Barndt, Participatory Research Center, Toronto, Canada:
"Participatory Research to help Citizens Produce Community Self Portraits" (audio-visual presentation).

Lluïsa Roca, Albert Estival, Servei de Video Comunitari, Barcelona, Cataluña:
"The Experience with Video in Stimulating Citizen Participation; the case of TERRENOS DE RENFE MEDITERANIA in Barcelona" (audio-visual presentation).

Theory and Practice, Second World:

András Szekfü, Institue of Mass Communication Research, Budapest, Hungary:
"Alternatives in Hungarian AV-Media; three ways for a social documentary to reach its audience" (paper and excerpts of film, if the film is available).

Theory, Third World:

Fernando Reyes Mata, Instituto Latino-Americano de Estudios Transnacionales, Mexico:
"Alternative Communication, Solidarity and Development in the Face of Transnational Expansion" (paper)

Practice, Third World:

CENDIT, Center for the Development of Instructional Technology, New Delhi, India:
A videotape will be shown, if available.

Alfonso Gumucio Dagron, United Nations Development Program, Managua, Nicaragua and Mexico:
"The New Cinema, an Alternative Form of Popular Expression in Latin America" (audio-visual presentation)

Chairpersons of the session:

Leonard Henny, Sociological Institute, Utrecht, Holland

David L. Paletz, Duke University, Durham NC, USA

Marino Livolsi, Università di Trento, Italia

The Session will be held as part of the program of the ISA Research Committee Nr. 14, "Communication, Knowledge and Culture", on August 18, 1982 at 15.20

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the main theme of the 11th World Congress of Scoiology "Sociological theory and social practive" the objective of session 5 on Communication and Citizenship is to discuss the present state of theory and practice of participatory communication in first-, second- and third world environments.

Theoretical positions concerning the function of communication in emancipation process, will be complemented and/or confronted by practical experiences presented by research scholars as well as by practitioners in participatory communication. The term participatory communication has been chosen as a connotation indicating the non-unidirectional communication between citizens, groups of citizens and institutions governing the citizenry. Thus participatory communication, ideally, transcends mass-communication as this term generally denotes communication between citizens through a more or less mechanical mass communication system, which intended on not-intended, is subject to some form of control by members of a power élite. In contrast, participatory communication aims at establishing the direct participation of citizens in two-way communication without some form of preselection, directing the form and/or content of the communication.

Mass media (including print-media and audio-visual media) can play a role in participatory communication. But if they do, they tend to perform an auxiliary function i.e., radioprograms, filmscreening, video presentations are used as catalysts to start groupdiscussions and/or conscientization programs. It is the person-to-person communication within the context of grass-root groups and grass-roots institutions that forms the focus of participatory communication. This perspective of the person-to-person communication is the common denominator which goes like a red thread through all of the papers and presentations of session 5, in which participatory communication will be the subject of analysis as it functions in first world, second world and third world environments.

Regarding the first world there are two theoretical contributions: David L. Paletz analyses the broader parameters of communication and participation.

In this summary of the contributions we will duplicate his chapter on political participation from his recent book with Robert M. Entman: "Media, power, politics" (the free press, New York 1981).
Paletz and Entman analyse the factors in the media that tend to hamper the political participation of citizens. Their contribution makes us aware of the need for another use of the media, if participation is a goal to be achieved through media work.

Leonard Henny, in his paper on "Alternative media, Participatory Communication and Counter-Ideology," attemps to delineate the borderlines between the three major concepts, mentioned in the title of the paper which play such an important role in the quest for a theoretical framework for the analysis and the eventual improvement of communication among grass-roots groups and between grass root groups and the more and less democratic institutions of modern societies.

These theoretical presentations are complemented and/or confronted by two presentations of practitioners: Deborah Barndt of the Participatory Research Center in Toronto will report on her experiences in participatory communication among immigrants in Toronto and among grass-root groups in post-revolutionary Nicaragua.

Lluïsa Roca will give a presentation of the work of the Servei de Video Comunitari in Barcelona Spain. Though Barcelona is geographically

situated in the first world there are many aspects in the work of the SVC that are reminicent to third world situations. The fact that the Servei works primarily with and for the Catalan speaking population brings in the dimension of cultural self-expression, in which video may play an important role.

András Szekfü, of the Mass Communications Research Institute in Budapest, Hungary can be considered both a theoretician as well as a practioner. He reports of his research in which he evaluated the group discussions among Hungarians following the screening of a film about the gypsy problem in Hungary. The aim of the film "Gyuri Cseplo" is to bridge the gap of understanding between gypsies and hungarians in Hungary.

Fernando Reyes Mata points in his paper to the relation between alternative media, and participatory communication against the backdrop of the transnational expansion of mass communication networks.

In this paper, which parenthetically was not written especially for session 5, Reyes Mata points, among other things, to the roots of alternative media and the cross connections with on the one hand the use of alternative media in small scale, grass roots political communication, and on the other hand the need for counterbalancing transnational information networks, such as the Inter Press Service, and the news agency pools of the non-aligned countries, the Pan African countries ALASEI and ASIN. These "alternative news agencies" do not directly relate to participatory communication as defined in the above. Nevertheless they are prerequisite for a more equilibrated mass media environment in which participatory communication can become more effective.
One report on practical experiences with participatory communication in the Third World comes from the Center for the development of Educational Technology in New Delhi, India (CENDIT), a center which uses radio, film and video in literacy campaigns and in conscientization programs.

Alfonso Gumucio Dagron finally will present examples of his filmwork with grass roots organisations in Mexico, Bolivia and recently in Nicaragua.

As will be clear from the above, the distinction between first world-second world and third world contributions appears to be a rather artificial one. Judging from the content of the papers and the descriptions of the intended presentations, the distinction only seems to hold for the geographic origin of the authors.

Yet a major hypothesis underlying the preparation of this session has been that, since there is an obvious difference between the socio-political context in which participatory communication takes place, it must be expected that the form and content of participatory communication will also differ in the three mayor socio-political regions of the world.

Maybe this hypothesis should be revised. Or, this session will give us some clues to analyse in an ever more systematic way the similarities and differences between participatory communication in first world, second world and third world environments.

LEONARD HENNY
Utrecht July 1982

SERVEI DE VIDEO COMUNITARI

The Servei de Video Comunitari (SVC) exists for more than five years in Barcelona, Spain. Started as the independent community video workshop VIDEO NOU it is now subsidized by the city of Barcelona.

The evolution from independent center, to an institutionalized service, depending on government funds, will be the subject of a seperate presentation at the world congress of sociology given in the program: "Audio Visual Productions in Sociology" (see seperate program).
In session 5, Communication and Citizenship Lluïsa Roca will make a presentation of one of the more recent projects of the center under the title: "TERRENOS DE RENFE MERIDIANA" (The Railroad neighbourhood).
In this presentation she will report on the experience of the production and the use of this videotape in participatory communication.

The old railroad yard has been bought by the city of Barcelona. 32 Hectares will be remodelled and rebuild with 200 low cost housing units a building for the firebrigade, various schools and a market. The population in the four surrounding neighbourhoods had had absolutely no information about the planning proposals. The role of SVC has been to enlist citizen participation in the planning of the neighborhood through the use of video.

The advantage of the video has been that abstract planning proposals could be visualized and that reactions of residents and planners to the alternatives could be made accessible to neighborhood meetings. Yet the SVC cautions that video should be utilized as only one of the means in participatory communication. In their evaluation of the experiment they point to the danger of the myth of the 1970ties, that video or "counter TV" could be the key to mobilizing citizen participation.

(L.H.)

CENDIT

The Center for the Development of Instructional Technology in New Delhi India has conducted a number of experiments in participatory communication with various kinds of technologies ranging from radio to video and satelite TV.

The experiment with radio was recorded in a small town called Sultanpur in the Saharanpur district in Uttar Pradesh .It consisted simply of interviews with women speaking of their burden of work in the fields and domestic chores, interviews about problems of self-employment (with a carpenter and a milkman) and a series of interviews with men and women about the issue of equality between males and females in India.
The programs were broadcast over All India Radio, and sollicited an unexpected unprecedented response, because they provided an experience of personal identification with commonly felt problems which largely remain undiscussed in the mass media.

The radio experiment was but one project of CENDIT during the eight years of its existence.
Other projects included the production and use of dramatized films as a means for stimulating discussion on family planning. The screenplay was performed mainly by village residents in the form of svang, a type of musical in the folk tradition.

In addition to the productions which originated at CENDIT, the Center also has been executing evaluation research; both to test their own films as well as to assess the effectivity of the educational satelite television program which is in operation in India under the sponsorship of UNESCO since 1959. During the last few years this television has been directed more and more to serve grass roots groups in the countryside.Contrary to what is generally taken for granted satelite TV does not necessarily need to be fully centrally produced and distributed. It is also possible to make local programs and broadcast these via satelite to a limited number of receivers in a given region or village. Thus, local issues can be made to be discussed at the local level, through television programs featuring local problems. They may even generate controversies, that are often necessary to start social change. However, the communicators do feel a responsibility in this respect vis à vis the residents.
As Shampa Banerjee describes in his report on the reception of satelite

community TV in Kheda:".....Using the media to register the protest of the oppressed invariably leads to confrontation with those in power. But in any such confrontation it is the people who have the most at stake, not the communicators or social activists. When a group of Harijans make an accusation against the village headman, they are the direct target for reprisal. For the headman has the forces of power behind him, and it is easier to punish a minority community than government or outside agencies. The communicators at Kheda have therefore found it safer to follow what they describe as a policy of "planned brinkmanship". Working on "the frontier of the permissible", they are quick to withdraw whenever a backlash is observed. The other method adopted is to present a real-life situation in veiled terms, fact as fiction.

The creation of this "false illusion" required greater effort and ingenuity on the part of the producers, and finally a variety of vehicles were used to convey it: drama, puppets, traditional folk-forms (especially Bhavai), satirical skits, etc. Some of these forms were also used to say things that neither real-life villagers, nor actors could have got away with.

One such programme is Hun Haan. This is a series featuring a man and a donkey. Together they questioned basic beliefs and mocked at the paradoxes present in human society. The donkey could ask why the Harijans should believe in a God who seemed grossly unfair towards them; he could point out existing hypocricies; he could state that Manu who created the caste system was a mere mortal. He was still exempt from reprisal....."

Over and above the program production, the evaluation research and the social action component, CENDIT also organises workshops to train community organisers in the use of audio-visual equipment in a strategy of participatory communication. Again quoting Shampa Banerjee:

" Eight years of involvement with developmental communication has provided the members of the Centre with a deeper insight into the problems of development, especially in the Indian context. It has also let them to draw certain conclusions. The urban bureaucratic model of talking to the people from a position of security and ignorance has failed to create credibility. The messages, divorced from the rural reality, have not carried conviction. The vast armies of the rural poor have been the silent

receivers of a one-directional flow of words that have left their lives unchanged. It is imperative, therefore, to take a new look at developmental concepts today. The communicator must cultivate a better understanding of the needs of the people, and provide the technology for more field-based programmes. The people must break their silence, and dictate the terms of development that are most relevant to their lives....."

Available literature:

Shampa Banerjee: "The Sound and the Silence-Experiences with Media in Development" CENDIT paper April 1981.

Shampa Banerjee: "Kheda: An experiment in Rural Television". CENDIT paper January 1981.

Sumanta Banerjee: "A CENDIT report on three community originated radio programs".

Ratjive Jaim: "Communication for Rural Development;
Another Approach" CENDIT Paper February 1979.

Shampa Banerjee: "Community Communication. A Report on a Workshop", February 1980.

(L.H.)

Alfonso Gumucio Dagron

Alfonso Gumucio Dagron is a bolivian filmmaker poet, and author of various books and articles on the social use of cinematography. He studied filosophy in Bogota, Madrid and Vincennes, and graduated from the Paris filmschool IDHEC in 1976.
During the period 1974-1976 he colaborated with Jorge Sanjines and his film-collective "Grupo UKAMAU" and cooperated on the important bolivian film "Fuera de Aqui". He also worked with Alain Labrousse on his films "Huelga de Hambre" and "Las Elecciones sindicales en Vilaco."
His own films include :
"Senores Coroneles", Bolivia 1976, "Tupaj Katari- 15 de Novimbre, Bolivia (1978)
"El Ejercito en Villa Anta", Bolivia (1979)
"Comunidades de Trabajo", Bolivia (1979).
"Domitila de Chungara: la mujer y la organización", Bolivia (1980).
"Luis Espinal en el Pueblo", Bolivia y Mexico 1980.
"Cooperativa Sandina", Nicaragua 1981.
A number of these films will be shown at the World Congress of Sociology as part of the program "Audio Visual Productions in Sociology".
In addition to his practical media work Alfonso Gumucio also theorizes about the use of audio-visual media in participatory communication. An important book in this line is his recent work: "El Cine de lof trabajadores" (the workers' cinema), published in Managua, Nicaragua (1980) and Caracas, Venezuela (1981).
Recently Gumucio has been contracted by the United Nations Development Program to lead a series of film workshops for community organisers and labor-union leaders in Nicaragua and Mexico.
His experiences will be transmitted to session 5 under the title: "The new cinema: an alternative form of popular expression in Latin America".

(L.H.).

ADDITION

Just before this booklet went to print I received the paper by France Vreg of the Fakulteta za Sociologijo, Politicne Vede in Novinarstvo of the University of Ljublana, Yougoslavia.

The paper "Communication an Participation of Citizens" will be read at the session by Mr. Vreg, as a substitute of the presentation by András SzekfÜ of Budapest, Hungary who has had to withdraw himself from a formal presentation of his paper because of lack of support for his travel to the congress.

(L.H.)