Conceptualizing the role of Social Marketing in Communication for Development: For the convergence of approaches and methods

M. Velmuradova

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Conceptualizing the role of Social Marketing in Communication for Development:

For the convergence of approaches and methods.

Maya Velmuradova, IRSIC – Aix-Marseille Université

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Extended abstract:

The idea to utilise the Communication explicitly for achieving the Development goals and objectives emerged in the same time as the idea of the Development Support itself, early after the Second World War in USA (Rogers & Hart, 2002). The researches on Propaganda, Mass Medias and their influence on Public Opinion highlighted the potential ability of Communication to change the social Behaviour. It got spread within the Development field, aiming to solve the post-war reconstruction problems nationally and internationally (Melkote, 2002). At that time, the evolutonal theories were used to define the only way of Development. The anthropological notion of cultural Diffusion served to prescribe the mode of communicating the technical progress advancements to the rural communities, in a vertical “Centre - Periphery” manner. The Dominant Diffusionist paradigm was born (Lerner, 1958; Schamm, 1964; Rogers, 1962, 1976).

However, the critical voices began to rise up from late 60’s, pointing out the numerous defaults in this linear unilateral conception of Development Communication and in its ethical background. Under the influence of neo-Marxist critical school, Dependency theories and the critical pedagogy, the communication researchers started to search for
new ways of achieving the Development goals through Communication. Refusing to be the passive absorbers of the ideas that are not necessarily adapted to the local context and value-neutral, they opted for an *Alternative paradigm* for Development Communication (Beltran, 1976, 1980; Diaz Bordenave, 1976; Querbal, 1973). Within this paradigm, the conscious of structural factors and self-determining local communities are “empowered” and capable to actively participate in a dialogical elaboration of development policies, becoming a start-point of the information flows. The prescribed modes of communication in this case are the “Periphery – Centre” and the “Periphery – Periphery” (Freire, 1970; Beltran, 1980; Huesca, 2002; Dagron & Tufte, 2006).

These ideas were picked up by the mainstream Development Communication research and the Social Marketing has been integrated into the Development Communication agenda (Melkote, 2002). Constrained by the public administration sector reforming, the policy makers and the communicators have agreed to listen to the voice of the final users, aiming at improving the Development support programs efficacy. Nowadays, the audience studies are done prior to the program realisation, and the *Social Marketing* strategies and techniques are used to convince the users about the service benefits. The relationships between the Marketing and Development are theorised by the Social Marketing, the MacroMarketing & the Communication researchers (Drucker, 1958; Kotler & Zaltman, 1971; Dholakia & Sherry, 1987; Mc Kee, 1988; Mc Kee & al. (eds), 2000; Dholakia & Dholakia, 2001; Andreasen, 1997, 2004; Steeves, 2002; Singh, 2002; Melkote, 2002; Cabanero-Verzosa & Mitchel, 2003; Andreasen & Herzberg, 2005; Talukdar & al, 2005; Roman, 2005; Kotler & al., 2006).

However, the “Marketing” term is not as popular as it seems within the Development sector (McKee, 1988, 2000). Its techniques may be seen as “manipulative”, while the
commercialisation of the public interest goods in a “business-like” manner may appear
dangerous. On the other hand, the users’ participation in audience studies is considered
as not sufficient by the Alternative paradigm partisans. It is seen as a “mean” to achieve
the Development goals imposed by the external agents. The self-determined
Development is proclaimed, where the local community participation in the “goals
setting” would be an “end” by itself (Huesca, 2002; Dagron & Tufte, 2006).

*What is the role of Social Marketing in Communication for Development: is it a “Good” or an “Evil”? Are the two above paradigms really incompatible?* The present theoretical
essay provides complementary arguments in favour of the Convergent Communication
for Development (Singh, 2002; Wilkins, 2008), integrating both the “diffusion” persuasive
methods and the “participative” ones. The Social Marketing for Development could play
a major role in this integrative framework. Indeed, it provides the theoretical bases for
the discussion and the conceptualisation of the “objects of change” (“upstream” and
“downstream” factors), as well as for the “communication modes” (“push” and “pull”
methods) (cf. table 1 here under).

We will first present a short overview of the Development Communication paradigms
and approaches, their advantages and critics. Then, we will propose a critical analysis
of the postulates that “oppose” the Persuasive Communication / Social Marketing for
Development on one side and the Participative Communication on the other side. On
the basis of this critical analysis, we will provide our theoretical support for the
convergence of these two approaches within one integrative multi-methodological and
inter-disciplinary framework (table 1).
Table 1. “Push” or “Pull”? Convergence of Development Communication approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of communication</th>
<th>Diffusion «Top-down», horizontal «PUSH»</th>
<th>Participative «Bottom-up» «PULL»</th>
<th>«Convergent» (all modes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Object of Change</td>
<td>Individual / social behavior (“downstream”)</td>
<td>(1) Change of individual &amp; social behavior via persuasion approaches (Diffusion, Entertainment, Social Marketing)</td>
<td>(3) Change of individuals via participation approaches (Dialogical pedagogy (P. Freire))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structural / institutional factors (“upstream”)</td>
<td>(2) Change of structural inequalities, critical school (Empowerment, UNESCO &amp; al; Media advocacy; ‘upstream’ Social Marketing)</td>
<td>(4) Structural / institutional Change, initiated by local community (Social Mobilization; Media Advocacy; Social Movements)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Díaz Bordenave, J.D. (1976). “Communication of agricultural innovations in Latin America: The need for new models”. In E.M. Rogers (Ed.), Communication and


Steeves, H. (2002). “Development Communication as Marketing, Collective Resistance and Spiritual Awakening”. In In Gudykunst, W. B. & Mody, B. (Eds.) Handbook of
