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Beyond Development Communication:
The International Research Experience

By

James D Halloran
BEYOND DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

BY

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FOR THE
AMIC - WACC - WIF CONSULTATION

SINGAPORE

18-22 NOVEMBER 1986
THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

In addressing the main theme of this consultation from the point of view of someone who has been engaged in communication and media research at several levels for over 20 years, I shall draw on experiences, occurrences and developments from a much wider field than one normally associates with "Development Communication". In fact I would argue that it is essential to do this in order to obtain an adequate understanding of the theme of the consultation. For this theme, important though it is, represents but a segment of a much larger field; but still a field let it be noted, not a discipline. The failure to recognize this and its implications – the need to draw on many disciplines to illuminate the field – has led to several problems, and is no doubt one of the underlying reasons for the apparent concern, dissatisfaction with progress, etc., which figure so prominently on the consultation agenda.

The nature of this concern and dissatisfaction is well illustrated in the introductory background paper. In this paper we can read that the optimism of 20 years ago associated with what some would appear to regard as the start of "development communication" was not really justified, and that the anticipated benefits (not always spelled out very clearly either now or in the past) have not been attained.

It now seems to be recognized that "the relationship between communication and development was more complex than originally thought", that "our concept of development was rather limited and perhaps not entirely correct", and that "practitioners, trainers and politicians are operating blind, encumbered by out-dated theoretical baggage and without a valid conceptual focus".

Granted the validity of these somewhat general, not very precise or detailed statements it is perhaps not surprising to read further in the background paper of both inadequate research approaches and the failure in policy and practice to make the best of what research has provided, the inability to cope with new developments (innovations in
communication technology, for example) and the isolation of "communication thinking" from that in other relevant fields and disciplines, particularly within the social sciences.

As it stands, and on the surface there is nothing in most of the above with which I would wish to argue, at least not at this stage. I don't expect I could really, having written along similar lines, only in much greater detail and within a wider context nearly 20 years ago. It is this apparent failure to progress - even allowing for the excessive feelings of déjà vu which come with approaching senility - which I regard as one of the main causes for concern.

In his book Communication and Social Change Michael Kunczik writes:

"At the outset, without any prettifying, it has to be stated that the researching of the effects of mass media on the processes of social change in countries of the Third World is in an acutely difficult situation. One indication of this crisis is the fact that in the most recent article on the sociology of mass communication in "Annual Review of Sociology", Holz and Wright (1979) devote, in all, eight-and-one-half lines to the theme "Mass Communication and National Development". With those few lines, in which at any rate the authors represent the current state of research, they recommend as an introduction to this matter the reading of a long-existent publication by Lerner and Schramm: "Communication and Change in the Developing Countries" (Honolulu, 1967). Now without needing to have perfected the art of reading between the lines, we can conclude from the above that here we are dealing with an area of research in which during the last one-and-a-half decades no important progress in knowledge has been made. The theme of mass communication and social change in developing countries has recently occasioned only very limited interest. This research gap leads many authors to take speculatively arrived-at concepts of the effects of mass media, which still require empirical examination, as proven."

The situation is made even worse - in fact this is at the heart of the matter - when it is realized that although, as already indicated, the right noises are being made, at least in some quarters, about inadequacies in approach, conceptualization, etc., the basic underlying causes of these inadequacies are rarely recognized.
There are several reasons for this which I would like to go on to explore. But before doing this, let me first emphasize that the problems of both the alleged inadequacies and the failure to appreciate their causes are not unique to Development Communication. For example, and there are many others, a recent (February 1986) UNESCO-sponsored symposium in Gottenborg, Sweden, on technological developments in communication and the wider implications of these developments manifested all these characteristics. At one level - the fundamental level of research and analysis that I wish to stress in this paper - I would argue that despite the special problems associated with any sub-field such as The Implications of Technological Developments and Development Communication there are basic problems and principles common to all the fields, i.e. the essential principles of good research.

At this stage obviously a bland statement such as this begs the question. What is associated with good research in the areas of our interest? I shall attempt to answer this, albeit briefly, in the hope that in so doing the flaws and shortcomings in the various approaches will be revealed. We are asked in the course of the consultation to address the future. I do not think we can do this usefully until we have correctly diagnosed the past and current malaise and the factors which have contributed to this. I see no signs of spontaneous recovery. So first let us deal with the nature of the problem, then attempt to identify some of the factors that have contributed to it, and are still contributing to it, and finally suggest some possible solutions.

There is nothing very novel or original in drawing attention to the problems associated with Development Communication. As we have seen, at a general level this has been done in the background paper provided for this consultation. More importantly, at a much more detailed and analytical level, at least two of the members attending the consultation, John Lent and Neville Jayaweera have provided us with substantial critiques of both the historical development of the field and the contemporary situation. Amongst several others Jan Servaes has produced a broad comprehensive overview, and as early as 1974 my colleague Peter Golding was drawing attention to some of the inadequacies in orthodox thinking.
It would be entirely superfluous here for me to attempt to review these reviews by authors such as Jayaweera and Servaes who, in their own ways and using their own terms, treat the subject historically and draw attention to the weaknesses and strengths of the different approaches, or perhaps I should say paradigms, for this is now the term in vogue. It would be superfluous for, despite the differences between the various contributors in emphases, in details of classification, in number of categories employed, in assessments and in degrees of optimism and pessimism, the overall thrust is in the same general direction, and is one which on the whole I would share. I would certainly not wish to argue with Servaes when he writes "Looking at the real situation of national communication policies in the Third World, nearly all nations' operational policies govern communication on an apparently ad hoc basis without any conceptual, organizational or structural framework."(11) My aim is to attempt to account for this situation.

However, in passing an important word about "paradigms". Paradigms are essentially post-hoc superimpositions and constructions, usually attempting to produce order from chaos - they are not normally present in the minds of those chiefly associated with them when the research is being carried out. This is well illustrated in the case of Lerner's Traditional Society work which led to the most influential of the publications associated with the old paradigm. In its conception and operationalization the research, such as it was, had little, if anything, to do with Communication and Development; it sprang from a Voice of America audience research exercise and reflected the cold war politics of the time. I shall return to this in some detail later.

It is also worth noting that paradigms, like any system of classification, can be misleading as well as helpful - they can lead to a stilted static view of things. To criticize the old paradigm does not mean that one has to embrace all that follows - to talk of the old paradigm does not mean that it is dead. Conflicting paradigms may exist side by side. This would appear to be recognized by Servaes when he writes "In terms of a dialectic process between a dominant and alternative perspective it can be argued that the modernization
paradigm continues to be dominant in practice whereas its theorists are facing a hard time finding a way out of the present crisis". (12) Again, this will receive further attention.

Moreover, in criticizing different approaches and paradigms we should guard against throwing the baby out with the bath water. The paradigm may be inadequate, but not all the research carried out within its framework need be invalid. There could also be methodological gains.

Development Communication research has more than one root and has been fed from various tributaries over the years but, despite this, it is essentially a part of mass communication research, and consequently shares the general weaknesses of this field as well as possessing its own peculiar ones. At the risk of oversimplification let us, albeit briefly and generally, take a look at these weaknesses and see in what way and to what degree they account for the unsatisfactory condition which is at the heart of the concern of this consultation.

If in our field we wish to make sense of our studies of society and the social processes within society we require, at the very least, valid models of society and these, amongst other things, must take into account organization, structure and institutional interrelationships. We also require an adequate understanding of social processes, particularly of the communication process and the process of influence. Unfortunately such models and understandings have not been the hallmarks of mass communication research.

In broad general terms the bulk of the research carried out, and the main characteristics of the underlying thinking have been psychologistic rather than sociologically holistic. The work has been media-centred, context being relatively ignored, particularly with regard to power influencing the operations of media institutions and the communication industries; the unit of analysis has usually been the individual and his disembodied attitudes; the process unilinear, causal and simplistic; the methods narrowly scientistic (with spurious divisions between "hard" and "soft"), incapable of
capturing the real nature of social processes and relationships. The overall function has been to serve and service rather than criticize and challenge.

The narrow approach to the process of influence affords a good illustration. There is much more to media influence than can possibly be covered by approaches which rely on attitude change, imitation, or other conventional psychological approaches. It is the undue emphasis on these approaches which has contributed to the inadequate understanding of the complexities of the communication process.

We know from our own and from other work that the media may exert influence in many ways. For example, they may set the social-political agenda by, amongst other things, defining problems, amplifying them, and suggesting solutions. They may confer status and associate certain forms of behaviour with specific groups or individuals, and label both behaviour and groups as good or bad. They may legitimate certain practices, values, structures and systems and, in so doing, promote consensus and solidarity and reinforce the establishment or status quo. On the other hand, their influence may be disruptive, in some cases exacerbating conflict. But this, as with other forms of disruption, although dysfunctional from one point of view, need not be so from the standpoint of those who seek change. In any case, the overall implications will depend not only on the media, or supply of information, but on a wide range of non-media factors.

Amongst other things we are concerned with power and control at national and international levels. But this is rarely recognized by the army of researchers who are convinced of their scientific integrity and value neutrality, and think only of politicization as applying to those who do not share their naivety.

Because of the above, the generally atheoretical nature of the work, and the aforementioned crudeness in conceptualization, there is little appreciation of the complexity of the communication process. Of course, there is a notion of process implicit in the overall approach, and this seems to have been derived (albeit unconsciously) from an acceptance of a one-way, purposive, 'top-downwards' model of the
communication process. At base, however, it is a version of a vertical process which is essentially sender to provider oriented, and it looks at the whole matter from the point of view of "the message giver" - asking questions about getting the message across, conversion, persuasion, effectiveness, etc. rather than meeting basic needs or asking whether the message is worth getting across; this is 'communication' in the service of the accepted, unquestioned system.

This outdated model, which still has its adherents, implicit and explicit, in certain areas of communication, education and psychology, is a totally inadequate one. For example, a great deal of communication is not purposive, nor is it one-way, and effects are not the same thing as effectiveness. Some of the most interesting consequences of any given act of communication need never have been intended and, needless to say, on the other side, what is intended is not always a clear guide to what actually takes place.

Of course, over the past twenty years or so developments in the contributory streams of psychology and sociology have been fed into the study of the communication process so that today we have more sophisticated and refined models than were available in the past. But old habits die hard, and narrow one-way psychologically-oriented approaches are still very much with us, although they are not always recognized nor accepted for what they really are.

So much for one level of analysis, broad and sweeping though it undoubtedly is. Obviously we cannot stop at this point, for the situation just outlined did not occur by chance - it was the product of a combination of forces. Moreover, these forces, in essence although possibly in different combinations, are still with us, and show no signs of fading away. An awareness of them is crucial to an understanding of past and present, and the sine qua non of change and beneficial developments in the future.

It would be unfair not to recognize that some progress has been made over the past twenty years or so. But my role here is not to dwell on this - the work of a small minority - but to draw attention to the nature, scope and influence of the efforts and products of the majority.
Despite the welcome developments, we are still very short on information - the sort of information that would provide a reliable base for policy formulation and decision making - and this becomes particularly evident when we are called upon to address such areas as Development Communication and International Communication.

What is more, because of the way research has been defined, initiated, supported and organized, and because of the tasks it has been called on to perform, we find that it is not just a question of not having enough information, but that the information we have is partial and unbalanced. We know far more about some parts of the world than about others; we know far more about some aspects of the communication process than about others, and we have more analyses and interpretations from certain value positions than from others. An additional complication is that the implications of these imbalances are not properly understood, and as a result we not infrequently encounter universal generalizations and cross-cultural applications which are just not valid.

Research is not initiated, organized, executed or applied in a social/political vacuum. A true understanding of the nature of research and its application calls for an understanding of the historical, economic, political, organizational, professional and personal factors which impinge on the research process in so many ways.

Put briefly, these are the factors that govern what research is carried out and, perhaps more importantly, what research is not carried out. In some way or other the questions we ask in research are indications of what we consider to be important or problematic. They reflect our priorities, our values, our concerns, as well as our compromises with regard to what is allowed or is otherwise possible.

Unfortunately, it would appear that many researchers, irrespective of their country of origin, do not recognize this situation. They accept as given, or take for granted as an unquestioned assumption, what ideally they should regard as problematic, and this, not
surprisingly, is reflected in their work, what they do, how they interpret it, and how they seek to apply it. There is even evidence of this in some of the consultation presentations.

The situation outlined above is an important consideration for those of us who regard research as a measure of social control and as a conditioned or circumscribed attempt to construct reality. It does this by the areas or topics that are selected and by the use of concepts, techniques, categories, systems of classification and categorization, and the positing of relationships within these areas. Again, these concepts, categories and relationships do not develop in a vacuum, they are not neutral, therefore we should know about the framework within which they have developed and are being applied.

I referred earlier to the unbalanced or uneven distribution of research internationally, and this is clearly a reflection of other areas of economic and informational imbalance which characterize the international scene. Certainly, as far as quantity is concerned, there is no doubt that the mass communication research field is dominated by research from western, industrialized nations, and this also applies to research which deals with development communication and Third World problems generally. Moreover, as we have seen it is dominated by a particular kind of research.

Over the years, many researchers have been accused of exporting western research concepts, models and methods which are not appropriate to Third World developmental problems. In general this is a valid point, but it is also an issue which is frequently characterized by false conceptualizations and confusion. There is a problem - a serious one - but it is not always well defined and, as a result, the right lessons are not always learned. Research on media and development has been, and is currently being, carried out in the Third World where the developmental criteria used and the overall approach are totally inappropriate. But this is not primarily because it is 'western research', whatever this may be; it is because it is bad research, and bad social science. This research, with its inadequate models of society and limited notions of the communication process is, and always has been, equally inapplicable and equally unsatisfactory in the industrialized nations where it was originally conceived.
A further difficulty also arises because of these misconceptions. The understandable concern about what is seen as research imperialism often takes the form of a demand that research in the developing countries must be carried out by researchers from those countries.

Up to a point, at practical and educational levels, there is something to be said for this. But it by no means solves the problem. In fact it may exacerbate it, if the native researchers have been trained (as they so often have) by those researchers from the industrialized nations who favour the inadequate approaches I have just mentioned. Perhaps we need to particularly beware of the "local collaborator" who tends to be more "obtuse", more "inflexible" and more "anti-nationalist" than his "principal".

The misconceptions which at times even produce criticisms, but which fail to get to the roots of the problem are well illustrated by one of the participants at the consultation, Michael Kunczik, in his reference to Alex Edelstein's comments on some of the categories to which various types of development communication researchers have been consigned.

He mentions the "data exporter", "safari scholar", "theory builder", "penny collaborator", "professional overseas researcher" and the "instant expert". Edelstein is correct - these researchers have all appeared on the scene at some time or other, ready to exploit a developing field. But what is not widely appreciated is that those who fit into these categories, and others similarly inclined, could all be removed without the overall situation being radically changed or the problems solved. Problem solution calls for more fundamental changes than the removal of these researchers.

The real problem, as already outlined, stems from the nature and extent of mainstream or conventional mass communication research. The main troubles are with the primacy of this position, the myths that underpin it, the blindness to its conditioning and implications, and the failure to recognize that all social research is embedded in cultural values. It is a position, let us remember, where "scientific" is defined solely or mainly in terms of method, and where little or no attention is given to theory, concepts or the nature of the relevant
substantive issues and their relationship to wider societal concerns. The possibility seems to be excluded, implicitly or explicitly, of sound methods, sophisticated theory, substantive relevance and critical thrust being quite compatible.

Mass communication research developed, like other branches of social science, essentially as a response to the requirements of modern, industrial, urban society for empirical, quantitative, policy-related information about its operations. Research was carried out with a view to improving the effectiveness of the media or the communication systems, often regarded simply as objects of study or as "neutral tools" in achieving stated aims and objectives, often of a commercial nature. This was at the heart of administrative or service research, where the emphasis was on improving methods to facilitate the achievement of specific goals rather than on refining concepts, developing theories or achieving social change.

In this way the research, although often referred to as abstracted empiricism, was certainly not abstracted from the society within which it operated, and which it was structured to serve. With this in mind we should ask about the questions which have not been asked as well as those questions which have. There were few, if any, questions about power, organization and control, little reference to structural considerations, and rarely were attempts made to study the social meaning of the media and the communication industries in historical or contemporary contexts. These ideas, these approaches, were of course exported with even more dire consequences, and permeate research at the international as well as at the national level.

It would, of course, be quite unfair and indeed inaccurate to suggest that over the years all mainstream or conventional mass communication and related research - most of it, but by no means all of it from the USA - had been slavishly administrative. It is not as simple as that. There have been many strands to the work and critical messages, social concerns and certainly professional accomplishments have not been entirely lacking. Still, even today, it is difficult to detect, in what is a vast body of work, any conscious, articulated, underlying philosophy or purpose, involving an interest in addressing
the major social issues of our time, including the meeting of basic communication needs. Moreover, although thousands of projects have been carried out there is still little evidence of the systematic accumulation and development of a corpus of knowledge, and there have been few attempts to relate the work to an appropriate social theory. It is still mainly a matter of doing rather than of thinking, of serving rather than questioning or challenging.

Conceptualizations may be crude, theories may not have been formulated, and even social/political relevance not clearly articulated, but this does not mean that the research - perhaps mostly irrespective of its quality - does not serve, directly or indirectly, clearly identifiable political purposes. A most powerful example of this, and one particularly relevant to our interests at this consultation, is provided by Rohan Samarajiva in his article on The Murky Beginnings of the Communication and Development Field: Voice of America and "The Passing of Traditional Society". The paper, which would appear to be appropriately titled, provides an historical and contextual analysis of the origins of the communication and development field in the United States in the 1950s, with specific emphasis on the seminal work The Passing of Traditional Society, by Daniel Lerner, and the research project on which it was based. Relying in part on original documents, apparently not always readily made available, Samarajiva makes a strong case that Traditional Society (and this really was a most influential work) was a spin-off from a large and clandestine audience research project conducted for Voice of America by the Bureau of Applied Social Research, and funded by the Office of International Broadcasting of the US State Department. Despite its influence in the developmental field, this work had more to do with the Cold War politics of the time than with issues at the heart of Development Communication. "The original focus was not on the relationship between empathy and media participation, but on radio listening behaviour".

Samarajiva argues that:

"The influence of these geo-political factors on communication research of the time is clearly manifested in the following excerpts from Harold Lasswell's contribution to Public Opinion Quarterly (1952-53: 498-300):"
We can see in communications research a positive factor in the laborious and time-consuming process by which the non-Soviet world is being transformed into a unified body politic. Essential to the consolidation of a body politic by methods short of conquest is the growth of a common attention structure. Research on communication has its most direct function to fulfill by modifying the attention structure of the non-Soviet world at strategic points....

[A] common frame of world attention ... will clarify the identity of genuine allies and enemies in the actual and potential alignments that arise in the building of a united body politic for the free world." (17)

The influence of economic and commercial forces on the development of communication research was mentioned earlier. Here, in addition to stressing the importance of the geo-political factors, Samarajiva also draws our attention to the influence of psychological warfare work, and in particular to the relevance of Lerner's attachment to the Psychological Warfare Division of the US Army in World War II. He quotes Lerner:

"In its 'cold war' with the Soviet Union ... the United States is offering mainly dollars ... to produce more 'good things of life' ... Should it turn out that ... the 'good things' we offer are not adequate competition against the 'better world' offered by the Soviets, we shall need to consult the intelligence specialist (the social scientist) and the communication specialist (the propagandist) rather than, or in addition to, the diplomat, the economist, and the soldier." (18)

A point is also made of the similarity in the categories used in classifying Nazis to those used in Lerner's Middle East work.

Additionally, it is argued that this seminal work poses several ethical problems, including nature of sponsorship, disclosure of sponsorship, infringement of national sovereignty, exploitation of co-workers, publication rights, and so on. These, important though they may be, are not our main concerns here, although it is worth noting that sponsorship was not disclosed by Lerner in Traditional Society. Our main concern in the context of this presentation and consultation is with formative forces and in this connection Samarajiva's research reinforces the case previously made that:
Different areas of communication were influenced by different phenomena in varying degrees. While marketing and audience research were the dominant influences on domestic media studies, psychological warfare appears to have been the major formative influence on the field of communication and development. This may help explain why the 'hypodermic needle' theory of communication and the Lasswellian formula flourished longest and best in this field. (19)

Interestingly, he goes on to state that:

Recent criticisms of the 'old paradigm' of communication and development have identified its manipulative, unidirectional nature as a major shortcoming. What is not realized is that what is now a shortcoming in a field that has been democratized and internationalized, would have been one of the main selling points for legitimacy and funding in the early years. (20)

He concludes by suggesting that:

Exploratory work on the early period suggests a pattern of net influence flows as follows: marketing research to communication research; marketing and communication research to psychological warfare; and from psychological warfare to communication and development. (21)

Such, then, are the pure and neutral beginnings of our field of interest. We might well ask Who are you neutral against? However, in view of these murky beginnings we need no longer be surprised at the expressions of concern and dissatisfaction with progress mentioned at the beginning of the consultation.

Neither should we be surprised at the hostility which is generated by any attempt to challenge and criticize the status quo, the conventional wisdom, the established ways of looking at things, and the vested interests associated with, or responsible for these.

Some years ago I wrote about the hostility which had been directed against UNESCO-related research which, amongst other things, had dared to criticize the received wisdom and challenge the vested interests. (22)

It is worth referring in some detail to this work - to this other side of the coin, so to speak - and I shall draw heavily on it in what immediately follows, for it complements Samarajiva's work, and is particularly important in illustrating opposition to research, and showing how the results of research are received by the established powers, and criticized and disseminated by their media agents.
Granted the present international position, mass communication research is not a game for remote academics engaged in research for the sake of research. Once the critical stance is adopted and responsibilities as independent researchers, scholars and intellectuals accepted, the researchers almost inevitably will find themselves in conflict with extremely powerful national and international forces who are convinced that they (and the world at large) have nothing whatsoever to gain from critical investigations. They are convinced that they know all they want to know about communication and the media. The current situation suits them fine and its maintenance or extension is what they seek. Alternative forms of thinking are not welcome because they might lead to alternative systems. What is more, they are most favourably placed to defend their position because, to a large degree, they are in a position to set the agenda and control the discourse.

It is worth remembering in this connection the massive, well-orchestrated counter-attack mounted by the international media establishment against the UNESCO-supported and related research which had exposed the nature and inequity of the international information order and suggested, inter alia, how the imbalance might be redressed.

Amongst other things then, the critical researcher questions and seeks to change the lack of balance in the international information order, but it must be emphasized that in so doing he needs to ensure that he does not leave himself open to attack from the international media establishment because of the lack of balance in his own research activities, or because he has failed to define the problems or apply his critical criteria within a wider universal context.

Unfortunately, the critical researcher has not always been as disciplined and respectful of evidence as he might have been. The hostility is there - we don't have to fuel it.

Of course, selections have to be made from many areas of possible enquiry, and it is perfectly legitimate to establish research priorities and make choices accordingly. But it is neither legitimate nor responsible for the critical researcher to be partial, blind, or
perhaps just simply naive, to such a degree that an outsider might assume that there were parts of the world so perfect that critical criteria, say with regard to access, participation and manipulation need never be applied. We need balance in research as well as in other communication areas.

A good example of the defence counter-attack and smear tactics employed by the establishment to fend off the critical challenge is to be found in Rosemary Righter's IPI-sponsored book, Whose News? Politics, the Press and the Third World. Righter refers to an extensive UNESCO research programme launched on the recommendation of a meeting of experts convened by UNESCO at Montreal in 1969 "to identify the ways in which the mass media can best serve the needs of present and future society". She refers to the Montreal Conference (for which I prepared the working document)\(^\text{23}\) as a watershed in UNESCO's approach to its research programme, which marks a shift from "a theoretical approach into an international action programme". For anyone familiar with mass communication research this interpretation is bound to seem somewhat strange for, as we have seen, one of the main criticisms raised by communications scholars and social scientists about mass communication research has been about its theoretical paucity.

The research programmes, projects, reports, etc., which are seen as stemming from the post-Montreal approach are criticized, and at one level dismissed, by Righter because she considers most of them as "wholly irrelevant to the actual problems of communication in the societies UNESCO exists to help". But Ms Righter would appear to want it both ways. She regards the work as useless and riddled with jargon, but "to dismiss it for that reason would be to ignore the purpose of UNESCO's new research programme" which she sees (without any obvious enthusiasm) as being essentially geared to informing policy-makers and as deliberately including "all aspects of the communication process - as an integral total". Admirable objectives I would have thought!
This new direction and emphasis is obviously not welcomed. That researchers should want to ask questions about media ownership and control, the formulation of communication policy, decision making in policy formulation, journalistic values, qualitative analyses of content, the agenda setting function of the media, the role of the media in the formation of social consciousness, the relationship between the media and other institutions, and between the communication process and other social processes, about international communication patterns, inequalities, imbalance, exploitation and the erosion of cultural and national identities is treated with suspicion and reserve by Ms Righter. She grudgingly accepts that there could be legitimate reasons for these questions and for such kinds of research. But clearly her main concern is not with a disciplined, social scientific approach to media and communication questions or with genuine attempts to systematically study complex processes and institutions so that policy may be better informed. Her pre-occupation is with her perceptions of the political/policy implications of the research developments at that time, particularly those associated with UNESCO and which question the status quo and the accepted ways of doing things.

It is interesting to see how Righter apparently regards with approval the conventional research approaches that prevailed before Montreal. As already shown, these approaches are still very much in evidence in some quarters and, not surprisingly, they were reflected in some of the activities that were mounted as a counter to the UNESCO sponsored and related research. This counter-research is not accidental and it appears to have been conceived as an integral part of a well orchestrated attack on UNESCO and anyone associated with research which, it was feared, might produce results critical of the prevailing international media system. In fact, some would argue that it represents a good example of the direct relationship between ideology and research. It is not unconnected with the withdrawal from UNESCO of the USA and the UK.

As I see it, the main hope of quite a number of researchers at that time (as expressed in the Montreal working paper, conference report and other publications) was that some form of critical approach
- not homogeneous, not representing any given ideological position, but diverse and pluralistic - in fact a form of critical eclecticism - would take over from the conventional research which up to that time had characterized both the field in general and UNESCO's research policies and programmes in particular.

As indicated earlier, this type of research had far reaching policy implications. For example, as far as communication development and the Third World was concerned, implicit in these models of research (but rarely explicitly stated) was the idea that development in the Third World should be measured in terms of the adoption and assimilation of Western technology and culture.

The main emphasis of the work was on increasing efficiency within the accepted and unquestioned value framework. In general, prior to Montreal, the research and projects sponsored by UNESCO (deficient in theories, models, concepts and methods) tended to legitimate and reinforce the existing system and the established order, and in the Third World it tended to strengthen economic and cultural dependence rather than promote independence.

It is also worth noting that many people previously unconcerned, or perhaps not aware of the problem, now feel with regard to such issues as "international communication", "media and development", "free flow", "new information order", etc., that the Third World has a good case. But who, before the results from this new research were made available, was able to support this case with hard evidence, and who was able to challenge the myths about the universal benefits of freedom (freedom to select from a strictly limited agenda) which appear to be readily accepted by the news agencies, their clients and supporters? What part did the now vociferous advocates of "free flow" play in facilitating free and informed discussion on this question? What research or enquiries on this score did they ever sponsor? They

* There is not the time nor space here to expand on this and spell out the diverse and pluralistic critical research for which I have argued elsewhere. (24) The essence of my case is that the complexity of our subject renders any single theory inappropriate, and that a range of complementary approaches represents the only fruitful way ahead. We should seek to promote eclecticism rather than make excuses for it.
only became interested, they only sponsored research, when challenged—when their interests were threatened, and of course it was intended that such research would produce results that would help them in their defence.

On the other side, so to speak, it is now argued, even by some of those sympathetic to the Third World, that "the virtues and benefits of the present system are in danger of being ignored in the current debate". This may be so, but we must remember that it is only recently that anyone questioned the prevailing system at all. Balance has only just been introduced into the debate. The virtues and benefits of the existing system were taken for granted, although not always specified or substantiated. What some of us see today as obvious inadequacies have been wrapped in a cloak of silence for years. Clearly the lifting of the cloak is regretted by many of those who speak and write in terms of "freedom". It is not without significance that those who lifted the cloak with their research are now attacked by those who so obviously benefited from the silence.

This is no doubt why in some quarters it was suggested some years ago that UNESCO research should be shifted away from such questions as "the right to communicate" to "more concrete problems". But what are these "concrete problems"? The same as, or similar to, the safe, "value-free", micro-questions of the old-time positivists who served the system so well, whether they realized it or not? All this represents a definite and not very well disguised attempt to put the clock back to the days when the function of research was to serve the system as it was, and not to question, challenge or attempt to improve it. This, then, is the political arena in which mass communication research operates. It is not that research has suddenly become politicized; it is more a question of the emergence of a balance, as latently politicized research is challenged by more overtly politicized developments.

But where do we stand in relation to all this? How do we with research interests, here at the consultation and generally, face up to the situation—assuming, that is, that we recognize and accept it. How do we go beyond development communication?
It is all very well diagnosing the situation, criticizing the past and present, and offering ideas for improved research in the future. The diagnoses may even be accurate, the criticisms valid and the recommendations potentially fruitful, but we shall remain at the level of potential if we do not recognize and address the power of those forces which govern any research activity. This is the social reality. In fact, accurate diagnosis should automatically lead to precise identification of these forces, although acceptance may be more problematic and, in the circumstances, change would be more problematic still.

When I contemplate surveying the communication research community in a crude attempt to classify researchers in terms of their likelihood to recognize, accept and deal with the situation, I am reminded of a similar attempt by the sociologist, George Simpson, who many years ago grouped members of the American Sociological Association in terms of their reaction to McCarthyism.

He identified the value-free, positivists, the social technicians, the efficiency merchants who, to put it crudely, would be happy constructing their sociometric diagrams anywhere for anybody. He didn't care much for these hard-nosed empiricists, but he had a great deal of sympathy for the committed, critical scholar who fearlessly addressed the major social issues of the time, and whose work, according to Simpson, obtained its quality from its commitment.

There were not many of these - Simpson included himself, of course - nowhere near as many as "those lilywhite liberals with both feet firmly planted in mid-air". Liberal, even radical after hours, but almost schizophrenic as they managed to maintain, deliberately or otherwise, a clear distinction between their work and their social/political lives generally.

Is there a parallel today with researchers in development communication? I think there may be. I shall say nothing further here about the social technicians. They have received adequate attention in this presentation and, for what they are worth, my opinions have not been disguised.
Neither have I sought to disguise my preference for the critical researcher, although I have accepted that this term may cover a multitude of approaches, not all of which are disciplined or show the necessary respect for evidence.

I also indicated earlier that many of those in this category would encounter hostility which means that they might experience difficulty in obtaining funds for the type of research they really wanted to do, and in finding appropriate outlets for the dissemination of their results.

With the ever-increasing emphasis on policy research, which is seen to provide quick, short-term answers to narrowly defined questions, the signs are that the circumscriptions are becoming tighter and the opportunities fewer for these researchers. In such circumstances some degree of compromise - even an occasional sup with the devil - may be inevitable (perhaps necessary) in order to keep alive, or at least to remain in employment. The situation is far from ideal, but understanding and tolerance are called for, particularly when we realize how much good critical research has stemmed from unlikely and unpromising beginnings.

It is the third, intermediate group, however, that I find most interesting and perhaps most relevant to our purposes here at this consultation, particularly if ever we wish to go beyond our present limits. I know not of the purity of their inclinations (liberal or otherwise), nor am I well informed about the position of their feet - but I think, like Simpson, that although I do not categorize in exactly the same way as he did, they are still quite numerous and perhaps, if I may say so without disrespect or undue arrogance, most likely to be in need of what hopefully stems from the central message of this presentation.

Put briefly, they are the people (I hesitate to estimate the proportion here at the consultation, but they are almost bound to be present) who, at least at a superficial level, share with critical scholars the dissatisfaction and concern at lack of progress, confusion, etc., in Development Communication, who may fully subscribe to the
critical messages and sentiments in the background paper provided for this consultation, but who do not understand - or if understanding, refuse to accept - the basic reasons for what they regard as the unsatisfactory nature of things. Nor are they aware of their own involvement in maintaining the status quo.

Again we must be tolerant, for it is indeed difficult to accept arguments which might possibly undermine the foundations of professional socialization. These may be seen as arguments which challenge the vested interests (in the best sense of that term) in what one has been led to believe is good social science, both with regard to individual practice and the "purity" of the environment within which the social science has developed, been conditioned and operates.

In these circumstances any attempt to educate, if I may put it that way; any attempt to bring about change in the interests of proceeding beyond development communication is likely to be seen as a threat. It may even be counter-productive because the provision of information in such cases does not necessarily solve problems and may lead to defensive reactions.

But this is a risk that must be taken because the conversion of this group could play an important part in taking us beyond development communication. Expressions of concern, dissatisfaction and cries for change and reform, no matter how sincere, are no substitute for an awareness of the social reality of one's position and activity. To continue in the conventional manner, unaware of the fundamental underpinnings and implications of the research being carried out, oblivious of the factors which condition it and are in return served by it despite all the good intentions, will not get us very far. Moreover, it may lead to further frustration and the eventual down-grading and weakening of the research effort.

This is the problem I have attempted to address. I am convinced it is a real one, and I sincerely hope my approach has not been counter-productive.
REFERENCES

1. Background paper distributed to all who participated in the consultation.


   See also: Proposals for an International Programme of Communication Research, COM/MD/20, Unesco, Paris, 10 September 1971.


6. JOHN A. LENT. DEVCOM: A View from North America. (Paper prepared for the consultation.)


11. JAN SERVAES, op cit, p.128.

12. JAN SERVAES, op cit, p.135.

13. MICHAEL KUNZIK, op cit, p.57.


17. Ibid, p.5.