Rethinking Development Communication

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Summary and Keywords

Here we, on the one hand, revisit the standard operating procedure in development strategies—“communication (technologies) for development”—and move instead to “development for facilitating communication” through exploring questions such as: Does communication facilitate development? Or does development facilitate communication? Which kind of communication can engender development? Which kind of development can ensure communication with the “margins”? We thus tighten and deepen the connection between the nature of development and the nature of communication; in the process we see communication for development and development for communication as mutually constitutive. We also invoke the question of praxis in three forms: (a) by exploring the connection between praxis and communication and seeing communication as not just a technique but as a question of praxis—where theories of communication and practices of communication are in a relationship, (b) by seeing developmental praxis as intimately tied to the question of communication, and (c) by letting praxis emerge as the “middle term” or the connecting link between development and communication. We deconstruct three discourses of development: the growth-centric discourse, those offering “developmental alternatives” (like human developmental perspectives), and those presenting “alternatives to development” (like postdevelopmentalist positions focused on “third world” or the “local,” etc.), to move to a fourth discourse that problematizes both modernism and capitalism, as it opens up the discourses of communication (modernist, dependency theory, participatory approach, etc.) for inquiry. We attempt to go beyond the modernist and capitalist understandings of development to introduce the logic-language-ethos of “world of the third” as against third world-ist imaginations. This helps us rethink the praxis of communication in creating, on the one hand, community- or social movements-driven developmental futures and, on the other, engendering post-Orientalist and postcapitalist forms of life in local or world of the third contexts. We also emphasize the need to reflect on the question of the “subject” (as also psychoanalytic conceptualizations of the “psyche”) and the need to learn to “work through” “groups” in order to usher in depth and nuance in the praxis of development communication.

Keywords: development, communication, praxis, psychoanalysis, subject, world of the third, communication and critical studies, capitalocentrism, Orientalism
Introduction

So, I tried to do a kind of semantic clarification in which praxis—if not on the
thither side of this divide—was perhaps somehow between the theoretical and the
practical as they are generally understood, and particularly as they are
understood in modern philosophy. Praxis as the manner in which we are engaged
in the world and with others has its own insight or understanding prior to any
explicit formulation of that understanding. . . . Of course, it must be understood
that praxis, as I understand it, is always entwined with communication.

(Calvin O. Schrag, cited in Ramsey & James, 2003, p. 21)

The question of development communication can be approached from two angles: a
dominant perspective—that is, development through the strengthening, deepening, and
widening of communication (the focus is, however, more on widening; i.e., bringing more
and more “victim” and “un-aware”/“uneducated” subjects into the orbit of what the
developmental sector or policy paradigm considers important or relevant for
communication) and communication technologies, on which there is already a vast body
of literature pertaining to the knowledge and practice, and the difficulties therein, that
aims to facilitate developmental processes and interventions—and a minor perspective,
“human development” (as against mere material development) for enriching and
deepening communication and for ushering in communicative reason and ethics.¹

The distinction between the dominant and the minor perspective can be expressed in the
form of two apposite questions: Does communication facilitate development? Does
development facilitate communication? Further, which kind of communication can
engender development (including the role of listening in communication; the question of
listening makes communication dialectical)? Which kind of development can ensure
communication; does the perspective of human development and the widening-deepening
of “capabilities-functionings”² à la Amartya Sen (1985, 1993, 1999) facilitate and deepen
communication as against growth-centric models of material development? This article
thus complicates the standard operating procedure in developmental strategies; it adds
to “communication (technologies) for development” the aspect of “human development for
facilitating communication,” and it sees communication for development and
development for communication as mutually constitutive.

This article, building on Schrag (2002, 2006), also explores the connection between praxis
and communication in terms of the rather complex and difficult “praxis of
communication” (not just the theoria or the poiesis/techne of communication) and the
“communication of developmental praxis,” that is, the communication of at times socially
just, at other times alternative forms of development to/in “community” contexts (once
again not just the theoria or the poiesis/techne of development). We make a somewhat
sharp distinction between praxis and poiesis, and we argue for the praxis of
communication rather than poiesis; this problematizes the question of communication.
What, however, is poiesis and how is it different from praxis? Poiesis refers to a form of
“making action” whose end is known prior to the practical means taken to achieve it; poiesis is guided by the form of reasoning that the Greeks called techne and that we would today call instrumental “means-end” reasoning. Poiesis is thus a form of instrumental action that requires a mastery of the knowledge, methods, and skills that together constitute technical expertise. For the Greeks, the activities of craftsmen and artisans were paradigm cases of poiesis guided by techne. And, as such, they were guided by “productive philosophy”—what we would today call “applied science”—which provide the principles, procedures, and operational methods which together constitute the most effective means for achieving some predetermined end” (see Carr, 2006, p. 426).

Development communication could be thought from the perspective of poiesis; it could also be thought from the perspective of praxis. Praxis is to progressively realize the idea of the “good” that is constitutive of a morally worthwhile form of human life; the “end” of praxis hence is not to make or produce some object or artifact. The good of praxis, however, cannot be “made”; it can only be “done.” Praxis is thus a form of “doing” action precisely because its “end”—to arrive at good life—“only exists, and can only be realized, in and through praxis itself.”

Praxis also differs from poiesis in that knowledge of its end cannot be theoretically specified in advance and can only be acquired on the basis of an understanding of how, in a particular concrete situation, this knowledge is being interpreted and applied. Praxis is thus nothing other than a practical manifestation of how the idea of the good is being understood, just as knowledge of the good is nothing other than an abstract way of specifying the mode of human conduct through which this idea is given practical expression. In praxis, acquiring knowledge of what the good is and knowing how to apply it in particular situations are thus not two separate processes but two mutually supportive constitutive elements within a single dialectical process of practical reasoning.

(Carr, 2006, p. 426; also see Dunne, 1993)

This article hence tries to replace poiesis as the connecting link between development and communication with praxis. Carr (2006) shows how “within the dominant culture of modernity, the concepts of phronesis and praxis have been rendered marginal and now face something approaching total obliteration” (p. 434).

The article presents communication as not just a technique but as a question of praxis—where theories of communication and practices of communication are in a mutually constitutive relationship—as also phronesis; by turning to the concept of phronesis the article puts to question universalist theories of communication and makes communication a particularized endeavor, an endeavor intimately and inalienably tied to what Heidegger calls the with-which—for example, the with-which of the community context—or what Haraway (1992) designates as a “series of ‘situated knowledges,’ part fact and part fiction, which are ‘artifactual’” (Watts in Crush, 1995/2005, p. 55).

We thus highlight the need to move, in contexts of communication, first from theoria to practice; second from mere repetitive practice to praxis, thus bringing theoria and
practice to dialogue; and third from poiesis to praxis, that is, from repetitive making/production to reflective doing, from instrumental action to reflexive processes. We also need to relate to and engage with the particularities of the community with which the praxis of communication is attempted. We highlight the need to move from, in contexts of development, from material development to human development and from human development to community initiated “new social movements”—new social movements as the medium through which alternative discourses to (rather than of) development are being articulated, as ground for “a more radical imagining of alternative futures,” and as polyvalent, local, dispersed, and fragmented (Porter in Crush, 1995/2005, pp. 61–84; Escobar in Crush, 1995/2005, pp. 205–222).

Paradigms of Development

It is not that communication could be thought of in terms of dominant-major and minor perspectives. Development too can be disaggregated into hegemonic forms of development (i.e., growth, income generation, progressive journey from a “third worldish” traditional economy to a modern capitalist economy so as to eliminate mass poverty), “alternatives forms of development” (i.e., the human development approach, growth with redistribution, means to better quality of life and well-being, etc.), and “alternatives to development” (i.e., postdevelopmentalist positions that generate a more thoroughgoing “cultural critique of colonialism-imperialism” and the not-so-secret civilizing mission; while the first two share a somewhat unexamined commitment to modernization and capitalism, the third problematizes modernism and Orientalism). One can also argue, premised on the three developmental perspectives delineated here, for a fourth position that problematizes both modernism and capitalism (such a [dual] problematization imparts to development communication a different and a double-edged form)—not just modernism and capitalism but Orientalism (i.e., the hierarchical division of the world into the [developed] West and the [underdeveloped] “rest”) and capitalo-centrism (i.e., the description of world and experience from the standpoint of only capital and the consequent division of the world into the capitalist/developed and the precapitalist/not-yet-capitalist/underdeveloped remainder) (see Chakrabarti & Dhar, 2009; Chakrabarti, Dhar, & Cullenberg, 2012; Chakrabarti, Dhar, & Dasgupta, 2015). The fourth position, premised on a critique of two constitutive centrisms, “Capital as center” and “West as center;” in turn problematizes “socioeconomic dualism,” which is the process of representing and interpellating an otherwise complex, decentered, disaggregated, and heterogeneous socioeconomic reality into the “logic of the two,” “p” and “~p,” where the former (p) is valued and the other (~p) is seen as “lacking p” and is hence devalued. So where developed is valued, underdeveloped is devalued; capital is valued, non-capital is devalued and represented in turn as precapital (i.e., as a prior stage of capital); modern is valued, premodern is devalued.6

In the first three understandings of development, especially the first, “what are not capitalist” class processes are grouped first into the homogenous whole: “noncapitalism”; noncapitalism in the Global South becomes in turn the undifferentiated lacking other—the
precapital of modern European industrial capitalism. Resultantly, reimagining the ethic of the social by cultivating “what are not capitalist” class existences becomes impossible. The noncapitalist class processes are thus left with only two possible futures—mutation into capitalist class processes through developmental communication or outright annihilation (through state-sponsored “primitive accumulation”). “What are not capitalist” spaces are thus represented as “what are not yet capitalist” spaces, as third world-ish, in need of integration into the logic-language-ethos of the developed first world, and as signposts of economic backwardness harboring peasant families, indigenous populations, informal sector workers, the poor, the hapless, and the malnourished. Given this logic of third-worldism development, communication is geared toward the inclusion of the “victim other” into the fold of capitalism-modernism. The precapitalist/third world emerge in this kind of developmental practice as the “appropriate(d) other.” Chakrabarti, Dhar, and Cullenberg (2016), however focus attention on an “inappropriate(d) Other,” inappropriate because it marks difference with capital logic, and inappropriated because it is outside the expanding and marauding circuits of global capital. They have provisionally called this inappropriate(d) Other world of the third (as distinguished from third world). World of the third as the harbinger of a noncapitalist language-logic-lived experience-ethic outside of and beyond the circuits of (global) capitalist modernity and that which puts under erasure capitalist ethic and language. However, in developmental logic world of the third is displaced into “third world”—third world as precapitalist—as a lower step in the ladder of progress and linear time. World of the third as also the critique of the capitalist present and future is thus reduced to a third wordlist past. Third worldism gives to development communication a certain form; here development communication is to transcend third world and inaugurate or usher in capital logic. Development communication on the other hand, informed by the perspective of world of the third (not third world) of outsidedness takes a different form; here development communication is to mark difference with capital logic, and here development communication is to reconstruct, even preserve certain aspects of world of the third.

Communication perspectives and the practices of communication thus could take shape in tune with the respective philosophies of development outlined earlier. The first two philosophies would work within a capitalist and modernist ethos, though the second would be critical of distributive injustice (and not so much of exploitation) and would focus on the expansion and deepening of capabilities/functionings; the third would be critical of largely Western modernism and would focus on the “local” and on social movements; the fourth would be critical of both (brown) Orientalism and capitalocentrism and would focus on communication for creating postcapitalist and post-Orientalist futures.

The four paradigms of development outlined earlier would engender different forms of communication praxis. One would need to ask: Which kind of development is communication for? Is it to transcend merely the lack in poor, rural individuals and communities? Or would communication help mark difference? Difference could be marked in two forms: first, it could be about the difference communities and contexts
mark with respect to dominant and homogeneous understandings of such communities and contexts (e.g., contrary to the standard denunciation of the adivasi context as underdeveloped [i.e., as \(~p\)], the child sex ratio (girls for every 1,000 boys ages 1 to 6) is 957 for Scheduled Tribes [STs] and 933 for Scheduled Castes [SCs] as compared to 910 for “others”; further, contrary to the foregrounding of the urban as developed, the child sex ratio of the nonscheduled caste, nontribal population is just over 900, meaning there are 100 fewer girls for every 1,000 boys in urban areas. More often than not, communities and contexts in the South or the third world are designated as also precapitalist or premodern; deeper communication with communities help us see differences within communities as also with respect to other contexts. Second, it could be about marking difference with respect to the logic of capitalism and the logic of modernism. Third, it could also be the ground for marking outsidedness—outsidedness to the logic-language-ethos of capital or of the idiom of the modern. Further, is communication for the annihilation of the precapitalist or the premodern? Or is communication for, as Tagore (2011) suggests, the reconstruction—critical albeit—of the noncapitalist or the nonmodern present into a habitable future? The article argues that development communication needs to address these larger and more foundational questions and not reduce development communication to mere techne or poiesis.

Paradigms of Communication

Diverse modes and modalities of communication have been researched and adopted over time in order to come up with effective tools that can enable and ensure smooth conceiving, designing, and implementation of developmental projects. However, historically, the dominant trajectory of development communication has largely followed the discourse of mainstream development, or, to put it playfully, it has followed the dominant trajectory of development (one dominant feature of the dominant trajectory of development is its top-down nature and its associated assumption that some are already developed [“p”], while some others are not [“\(~p\)”]; and it is the already developed that will show the underdeveloped the way to be developed: communication is a way to show the way). One could call it the “bullet” or the “hypodermic needle theory” of development communication (Moemeka, 1994, p. 5). Post–World War II, the so called developed countries of the West undertook the project of developing (which at times is marked as modernizing) the “rest of the world” (the trope between 1750 and 1815 was “progress” [Hettne, 2009, pp. 36-41]), a world which since then has come to be known as the “third world”) and the bullet-like or the hypodermic needle-like model of development communication became one of the key mediums in assisting its promotion and propagation. Such a model of development engenders an engagement of the first world with the rest of the world, leading to the conceptual duality: West/advanced (standing for largely capitalist modernity) and the rest/lacking other” (standing for largely precapitalism, tradition, structural poverty, and social staticity/regression) that rationalized a civilizing logic of the uplifting of the rest/lacking other in the image of the West/advanced. This approach also focused on “communication’s power to help cause development”—both human and socioeconomic (Moemeka, 1994, p. 4) (which paradigm
of development would, however, remain a question). It was in turn premised on the positive effects of mass communication and mass media on society (see Klapper, 1960) and its power to (a) transform “traditional society” (Agunga, 1997; Lerner, 1958); (b) usher in political integration (Almond & Verba, 1963) and political democracy (Cutright, 1964; Deutsch, 1964); and (c) bring about cultural diffusion, adaptation, and adjustment in society (Pye, 1963). Moemeka (1994) shows how in none of these approaches—which saw communication as an instrument of development—was there much attention to the economic, cultural, or political experiences or realities of the “subject” with which communication was being envisaged or attempted. In other words, the subject was reduced to a mere object of communication, and context was missed. Much of development communication hence happened in the poiesis mode, and not in the praxis mode. Also, some societies, earlier called underdeveloped and now termed developing were expected to be shaken out of their traditional slumber or the slumber of tradition as also of their “isolation” through communication technologies.

The modernization paradigm, which is also called the “dominant paradigm” in development communication, aimed to develop and modernize the “backward” countries by doing away with “traditional” belief systems and lifestyles and worked toward transforming the mindset, attitudes, and behaviors of people through the adoption of modern and scientific rationality, technology, the logic of the capitalist market, and the values of liberalism and democratic systems. “‘Catching up’ was a typical expression of the modernization imperative, the metaphor being some sort of ‘race’—even a deadly race” (Hettne, 2009, p. 53). In other words, development communication was a means to produce individualized subjects of enlightenment laden with core values of modernization through “persuasion” in the “diffusion model” of communication. Mass media played an important role in perpetuating the vertical one-way and top-down models of communication wherein the recipients were considered passive audiences (the “lacking” other/—p) waiting to be influenced by the dissemination of information from the senders; the messages were to be sent from the supposedly active and modern first world to what was considered the passive and backward third world.8 This article tries to reimagine development communication by problematizing the extant division of the world into somewhat homogenous blocks: center/periphery, North/South, West/East, first world/third world.9 It also problematizes by default the paradigm of development communication premised on this division and the ascription of whole nations as first/developed and third/underdeveloped, which also translates in Marxist milieus into the division of, at times, whole societies into capitalist and precapitalist. The “life-world” and the “worldviews” of the “underdeveloped” go unnoticed in development communication, because the underdeveloped are understood in terms of that which is developed.

Instead, the article argues for a decentered and disaggregated understanding of the world and of nations into, on the one hand, dynamic flows and circuits of global capital and, on the other, that which in a contingent sense is outside (and is not the underside, the underdeveloped underside) of such flows and circuits of global capital. In this article, building on Chakrabarti, Dhar, and Cullenberg (2012, 2016), we introduce “world of the third” as such an outside or the experience of such an outsided-ness. The turn to the
world, the life world, and the worldview of such an “x”—designated world of the third—marking third-ness into the extant division of the world into two: first world and third world, which is not a world of two but is a world of the One (say “p”) where third world is merely lacking p (say “¬p”)—marked third because it is neither inside nor is the underside (¬p)—renders problematic the spatialized notion third world. This in turns renders the question of development communication suspect. Do we train the world of the third? Or do we also learn from the world of the third? Do we learn development? Do we learn communication? In what ways do we learn to learn from the supposedly “othered”? Does moving away from poiesis and tending toward praxis or phronesis help us to better understand some of these questions?

The redrawing of the cartograph of the world and by default the cartograph of development communication becomes relevant because by the end of the 1980s it was evident that developmental processes had failed to deliver expected results and achieve intended outcomes. The modernization paradigm was faced with severe criticism on the grounds of neglecting the larger historical and sociopolitical contexts of different countries and maintaining focus only on dominant economic factors. “By providing ready-made recipes emphasizing what a country should do to develop itself, modernization’s proponents overemphasized the power of individual countries and ignored elements, such as colonization, past exploitation of resources, and globalization” (Mefalopulos, 2008, p. 45) as also divisions within the nation, including “internal imperialism” (see Chakrabarti & Dhar, 2011). Later, this dominant paradigm was abandoned on the claims of being culturally insensitive, theoretically flawed, and methodologically inadequate (Servaes, 1991, cited in Mefalopulos, 2008, p. 45). The dominant use of mass media and the vertical one-way model was also reviewed critically for its linear approach, viewing audiences as passive, focusing largely on dissemination of information and tangible communication products and for neglecting possible cross-cutting, more dialogic, and interpersonal forms of communication. In other words, both the extant paradigms of development and communication were put to critique.

Such critiques shifted focus from the modernization paradigm to “dependency theory” that originated in Latin America in the 1970s. This theory argues against the fundamental assumptions of modernization. It turns the table on dominant developmental paradigms by holding developing countries accountable and responsible for conditions of underdevelopment in the Southern hemisphere.

Dependency theory claims that the imbalances in the world’s state of affairs were mainly owing to the international division of labor and to the continuation of past patterns of domination. The world was separated into two blocs: the core, composed of a few rich countries, and the periphery, composed of many poor countries. According to this perspective, core countries took advantage of their technological know-how, superior infrastructure, and economic power to strengthen their lead. The main role of the peripheral countries was restricted to
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that of supplying raw materials and cheap labor to the richer ones, making it impossible for them to ever catch up.

(Mefalopulos, 2008, p. 47)

Although this theory helped revisit the paradigm of modernization and its reliance on “import-substitution” significantly influenced the development policies of few countries (in spite of the overall inadequacy of this policy), the focus of this paradigm also remained limited to economic concerns. Moreover, where on the one hand, it shifted the onus of underdevelopment in some countries from those very countries to the modern and developed countries of the West, on the other hand, it failed to explain causes of underdevelopment and generate “alternative imaginations of development” or “developmental alternatives” premised on the materiality of such causes. Since the sociopolitical, historical, and cultural factors remained largely unexamined and unexplored even in the conceptualizing of dependency theory, it failed to take a significant leap away from the modernizing paradigm. The role of mass media narrowed down with this approach, but it nevertheless remained as one of the main forms of development communication. The uneven flow of communication from the West to the rest was challenged in this system, and a demand for a more balanced flow of communication was made. However, “at the national level, they [i.e. the proponents of dependency theory] often neglected to consider the horizontal component of communication within countries and failed to give proper attention to the potential of privately owned media and community media” (Mefalopulos, 2008, p. 50), especially, as this article would like to argue, community-based communication initiatives. Excessive reliance on state-led mass media communication also prevented “freer,” creative, multisited, and polyperspectival innovations through community-initiated systems of communication, keeping it largely a one-way communication flow from state to people; the only difference with the modernization paradigm was that this time the control, flow, and purpose of communication was premised on a critical inquiry of developmental processes.

The recent developments in developmental theory arguing for bottom-up and community or people-based development have shifted the course of development communication toward the adoption of participatory approaches that now view individuals not merely as passive recipients but as active agents of development, who are imbued with the capacity to be “empowered,” with the assumption still remaining that the third world subjects are alienated and have been hitherto powerless and lack empowerment. Moreover, this approach relying upon Western ideals of participation and “empowerment” does away with any possibility of chancing upon another/different language(s) of participation and empowerment in the process of community engagement. The reasons behind the participatory approach (and these reasons seem to be either highly utilitarian or are premised upon Orientalist assumptions about the developing world), as listed as follows:

1. services can be provided at a lower cost.
The participatory perspective in development communication critiques the “one-size-fits-all” formula and at least builds along the frameworks of multiplicity of approaches to development, with some attention to indigenous knowledge (even if in terms of “use”; see Servaes & Malikhao, 2008, p. 169), including possible plural conceptualizations of empowerment, autonomy, and participation. However, since participation continues to remain a broad and open concept drawing multiple meanings and understandings, it has been argued that this approach has not been adequately adopted and implemented to gain desired results and outcomes. Some scholars have argued in favor of the broadness of the concept (as it keeps it flexible and adaptable). However, it has also been proven that the participatory approach can be appropriated to continue the modernization paradigm of development communications. The varying degrees and typology of participation as discussed by Mefalopulos (2008) are

1. passive participation, when stakeholders attend meetings when informed;
2. participation by consultation, when stakeholders are consulted but the decision-making rests in the hands of the experts;
3. functional participation, when stakeholders are allowed to have some input, although not necessarily from the beginning of the process and not in equal partnership; and
4. empowered participation, when relevant stakeholders take part throughout the whole cycle of the development initiative and have an equal influence on the decision-making process. (p. 52)

However, there is no denying that the participatory approach departs significantly from the universalist paradigms of modernization, as also dependency theory, and focuses on multiple approaches taking conceptually into consideration the sociopolitical specificity of different communities and contexts. “Common features of this perspective are the emphasis on people, the endogenous vision of development, and the attention to power and rights issues” (Mefalopulos, 2008, p. 51). This approach has also moved beyond just economic dimensions to incorporate the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (1990) focusing on concerns related to education, health, gender, and so on. “It stresses the importance of cultural identity of local communities and of democratization and participation at all levels—international, national, local and individual. It points to a strategy, not merely inclusive of, but largely emanating from, the traditional receivers” (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008, p. 169).

In theory, this model of development communication relies upon professional use of dialogic, circular, and two-way horizontal conceptions of communication, aiming for
interactive and balanced flow of messages, knowledge, and perceptions. Unlike the modernization paradigm, the participatory approach claims to remain process-oriented and to determine the outcome as communication is facilitated, context/situation is analyzed, and appropriate strategies are designed. Its objective is to be more concerned with the exchange of meanings, the social relational patterns, and social institutions. Servaes and Malikhao (2008), using McQuail’s (1983) quote point out that “‘another’ communication favors multiplicity, smallness of scale, locality, deinstitutionalization, interchange of sender-receiver roles (and) horizontality of communication links at all levels of society” (p. 97). “With this shift in focus, one is no longer attempting to create a need for the information one is disseminating, but one is rather disseminating information for which there is a need” (p. 170). The movement is thus from “information dissemination to situation analysis,” from “persuasion to participation.”

Moreover, given the objective of participation, which argues for control and decisions of a developmental project in the hands of the stakeholders, the approach aims to address questions of power distribution in the sociopolitical milieu and work toward “empowering” individuals through capacity-building programs. These mechanisms, in turn, hope to build consensus and trust among the stakeholders, mitigate risks that could impact the design and implementation of the project, and ensure efficient functioning and sustainability of development projects. Thus development communication together with processes of participation and empowerment aims to not only facilitate developmental projects but also take forward the agenda of social change. However, a range of underlying assumptions seem to haunt the conceptualization of this approach. For instance, Mefalopulos (2008) argues,

By engaging stakeholders who often have been excluded from any form of decision making in their lives and allowing them to engage in the decision-making process, development communication not only reduces poor people’s “capability deprivation” but also facilitates the process of empowerment, going well beyond the specific initiative in question. Using dialog to engage stakeholders in probing and assessing the situation can help break the broader vicious circle of poverty, where income cannot be earned without a proper level of individual capabilities, and individual capabilities cannot be improved while the individual remains in conditions of poverty. (pp. 55–56)

Thus, although the work of development communication has moved or has been displaced in the aforementioned manner and the conceptualization of development has also perhaps shifted (learnings from developmental communication, say the problems of objectification has informed developmental thinking, and problems of developmental practice have informed questions of communication), in spite of their differences much of development communication thinking and practice is still driven by “Capitalo-centric and Orientalist” imaginations. For example, in the previous quote the assumption that “stakeholders” “have been excluded from any form of decision-making in their lives” and that they will have to be “allowed” “to engage in the decision-making process” hints at the hidden third worldism in the participatory approach, which remains tied to the “p/~p” framework;
even in this approach it is assumed that the participants are mere victims “lacking” knowledge and experience of everyday processes involving decision-making; and the lacking and underdeveloped ~p has to be allowed and facilitated by the “knowledgeable”/“developed”/“modern” p. Yet another assumption in the quote is that the poor lack capability and are in need of empowerment. It is believed that material deprivation and lack in the sense of empowerment go hand in hand, the assumption being that conditions of poverty and capability deprivation are mutually constitutive. In that sense, the differences in development communication thinking and practice are internal differences or differences within the standard operating procedure of development communication.

To produce a radical rethinking of development communication one will have to add to the participatory approach the question of (a) the subject, (b) the psyche, and (c) the group (see the next three sections of this article). The question of the subject in development communication opens up with the participatory approach in which the individual, for the first time, is conceptualized as an agent and autonomous stakeholder capable of being empowered. Prior to this, especially in the modernization and dependency theory, the subject was reduced to a passive object of communication. In the participatory framework, although the participant is not represented discursively as object/instrument of development, the question of the subject in itself remains unexamined. The reliance of the participatory approach upon the simple formulations of the subject as agent and capable of empowerment takes it back to the framing of the modernizing agenda. Moving beyond the modernist understandings, we attempt to explore the question of the subject in the next section in ways that can look back on the theorizations of development communication.

Development Communication and the Question of the Subject

The inauguration of the “logic of the two” in the fourth paradigm of development rather than the “logic of the one” (marked by the “p/~p”) takes us to newer understandings of the subject. When communication is rethought to acquire a format that involves two subjects rather than one (moving from one-way monologic communication processes to two-way dialogic communication processes), the other reaches a self-representation and a self-description of its own; the other is no more the “lacking other” or the “other of the Same.” He or she communicates in a language different from that of the hegemonic. Thus development communication works toward processes of subjectivation that lead to agentic and empowered subjects; however, it fails to communicate with existing (perhaps existing “outside” its framing) and at times resisting subject positions. Chakrabarti and Dhar (2009, pp. 17–18) argue that the subject after all is not “passive” (waiting to be assimilated in development discourse) but active and creative. He or she is active and creative, not in the sense of responding to interpellating calls of development (which he or she may do at times and, hence, the aspect of hegemonized subjectivity needs to be
kept in mind) but in the sense of managing his or her own visibility, thinking, experiencing, and attending to acts and events in relation to the world and that too “empowered with various repertoires and skills of self-presentation” not reducible to the ones forwarded by the hegemonic (Yar, 2003). The question of subject–subjectivity is important because, apart from the knowledge of our selves given, promoted, propounded, reiterated by and through a developmentalist regime, apart from the objective knowledge of ourselves (say statistical knowledge pertaining to per capita income or human development indices) put forward by developmentalist regimes, one also has a subjective understanding of one’s fundamental, or perhaps not so fundamental, mode of being-in-the-world, that is, being in a development-driven world. The question before us is how does development communication respond to such alternative understandings of the subject? What effect can subjective reasonings, affect, intimate relationships, intersections of gender, class, caste, ethnicity, nationality, and so on have on processes geared toward development communication? Chodorow (1989) argues that, nearly everywhere, “one forms a psyche, self, and identity” (p. 4). Subjectivities are constituted in relation to the others, larger social-political-cultural structures and events, and are marked by the interplay of affirmation and negation of identities. Moreover, subjectivities cling to ambivalences, unconscious desires and fantasies. Can development communication begin to take into account these aspects of the subject in question? Chakrabarti and Dhar (2009) offer a notion of the hegemonized subject to explain the persistence of capitalocentric-Orientalist developmental regimes and insist on a well-entrenched theory of subjectivity. They argue that, in order to think of the subject in the context of development, one needs to think of the “subject-in-interpellation,” or to think of a theory of “subjectivity” and “subjection–subjectivation” beyond the objectifying process of being spoken and produced by discourse (by the discourse of, say, development), beyond discursively constituted subject positions (Gibson-Graham & Amariglio, 2006, pp. 201–202). Even amid the constitutive restlessness, contradictoriness, and motivated irrationality of minds (Lear, 1998, pp. 80–122), one needs a theory of the hegemonized psyche that is marked at the same time by the unconscious; one needs to ground the “myriad substances of hegemonized subjectivity as a supplement to identity.” Building on Chakrabarti and Dhar (2009, p. 19) the question of the subject in the context of development communication can be approached from at least four (if not more) angles:

1. The subject of development as the hegemonizing subject that remains unseen; that remains hidden behind a discourse of progress or of technological growth, or of an unfolding of the forces of production (see Hettne, 2009). Here the subject emerges as the Instructor Vanguard of developmental communication.
2. The subject of underdevelopment as the poor “third world” subject—who is languishing in a pathetic state—who needs development. Here the subject emerges as the object victim of developmental communication.
3. The subject of development as the hegemonized subject who is foregrounded—as if the subjects want development—whose need–demand–desire is foregrounded as autonomous. This is the subject that, as if, legitimizes developmental communication in its top-down apparition.
4. The subject of displacement-dislocation who is projected as “an unfortunate victim at present but who would be a beneficiary in the long run”; in the process, the need-demand-desire of the subject of displacement-dislocation as also the pain-suffering of the subject of displacement-dislocation is put aside (purloined) if not put outside. This subject is brought into the orbit of developmental communication to generate buy-in into the logic of capitalist development.

The praxis of communication hence needs to think about which form of developmental philosophy will inform the content of its communication. Or would it build on the resisting subject, or the counterhegemonic subject who sets up a different relation to the signifier “development,” a relation not in terms of capitalism-Orientalism, through at times new social movements (see Escobar in Crush, 1995/2005)? Here the subject does not just rethink development. The subject also rethinks development communication. Thus the inauguration of the question of the subject, embedded deeply in the psychoanalytic-social/cultural-political milieu (see Chitranshi, 2016; Dhar & Chakrabarti, 2014; Parker, 2011) helps us rethink the praxis of development communication. It stresses a critical understanding of development (as discussed earlier) and a reassessment of the praxis of communication (as explored in the next section).

The Question of Communication after the Psychoanalytic Turn

We need perhaps a deeper understanding of communication, an understating of communication beyond what is available in terms of what gets written on the “transparent surface sheet” of the Mystic Writing Pad (see “A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad” [Freud, 1925/1940]) but is retroactively recuperated with difficulty-patience-care from the somewhat illegible script, from the other kind of language inscribed-encrypted on the wax slab underneath. What, however, is the Mystic Writing Pad?

Here the Mystic Writing Pad could be seen as a possible metaphor of the complexity of the human psyche (as against the rather simple notion of psyche with which much of the space of development communication works). Freud invoked the Mystic Writing Pad as a metaphor of the psyche to in turn foreground the importance of conceptualizing the psyche through the trope of writing. However, for Freud psychic writing was not ordinary or simple writing; it was not writing that was transparent or self-evident. Psychic writing was at least two layered; in fact it was simultaneously two-layered: one layer was as if apparent and the other was as if it was beyond us, yet that which was beyond us was intimately tied to writing that was apparent. Freud thus cracks the common-sense understanding of writing and, in the process, the common-sense understanding of the psyche. The psyche was like a two-layered writing apparatus where the two layers were writing simultaneously, one constituting the other in ways not altogether known to us. To understand the psyche one needed to understand both layers and not just one layer; one also needed to understand the relation between the two layers. Of the two layers of writing, one is written on the surface and can be erased; the other layer is the sum-total
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of the wax impression of what has hitherto been written on the surface layer. According to Freud, human beings possess a surface system, which receives perceptions but retains no permanent trace of them so that it can react like a clean slate to every new perception, while the permanent traces of the excitations that have been received are preserved in deeper systems lying behind the perceptual systems. This double system contained in a single differentiated apparatus—a perceptually available innocence (an apparent innocence) and an infinite resource of traces (traces that cannot be erased)—is reconciled with the Mystic Writing Pad, which offers an ever-ready receptive surface as also permanent traces of inscriptions have been made on it. Thus received inscriptions cannot be lost altogether, although such inscriptions would not qualify as a known script in the ordinary sense of the term. Traces of an unknown script remain, not on the surface, not on the writing surface, not on the given surface, but somewhere else, in another register; in an Other register, elsewhere, in another way: “it thinks” in another way; it writes in another way. “It thinks rather badly, but it thinks steadily. It is in these terms that Freud announces the unconscious to us: thoughts that, while their laws are not exactly the same as those of our everyday thoughts . . . are certainly articulated” (Lacan, 2006, pp. 458–459). The experience of development is lodged somewhere here; in a certain inassimilability and illegibility. Decipherment, learning to read, or perhaps a “theory of readability” interpretation in the face of obvious obstruction, a conjecturing of significance despite its apparent absence, establishing a cultural Verbarium of communication (see Abraham & Torok, 1986, p. 107) is perhaps the ground for the praxis of development communication. We would also need to understand development communication not as the work of a “few shepherd subjects” (as in the modernization theory) and more as the work of a “flock of subjectivities”—polymorphous, heterogeneous, disaggregated, conflict ridden, and contradictory—engaged in participatory processes of transformative social action/praxis or new social movements.

Development Communication as Ground for Transformative Social Praxis

The master’s in philosophy (MPhil) degree program in development practice at Ambedkar University Delhi, which in turn is a two-year action research work in a particular rural context, focuses on “communication with communities.” The program attempts to re-create (not simply theorize) the philosophy of transformative praxis as it rethinks development, as it revisits communication, and as it reimagines praxis itself. One such endeavor toward transformative social action that began five years ago in a small village called Emaliguda in the Rayagada district of Odisha can perhaps offer a few illustrations to reflect upon our explorations here.

The work in Emaliguda began with living (in the MPhil program it is designated “immersion” [not field work]) in the house of a single woman, Arnalu Miniaka, whose language, logic, life-world, and ethos was unknown to the action researcher. To live and to communicate, the action researcher had to first learn the language. The movement
from sign language to speech in broken local words made the world of Arnalu Miniaka slowly accessible. These were perhaps first or baby steps toward the praxis of communication. As the barrier of language receded with the action researcher learning the language, everyday informal conversations with single women in the village became a routine. Many shattered lived experiences were shared. As women opened up their lives, more women joined in to do the same. Discussions among women slowly evolved and helped them revisit experiences that they had buried deep down. Through these discussions women examined their lives on their own and articulated their concerns and issues. As collective articulation and analysis of the condition of singleness among Kondha adivasi women took place, it led to the building of a single women’s collective, called Eka Nari Sanghathan in the village. The Sanghathan was forged as a space of friendship, belongingness, and togetherness for women who had been either abandoned by their families or were treated as burdens and liabilities.

The coming together of women in the Sanghathan is not seen as a means to attain some common/shared goals (such as increasing numbers in order to attain rights and entitlements) but as an end in itself (where women come together to share their life with each other). Communication among women remains one of the most important aspects guiding relationality in the Sanghathan. However, it functions not only as a support group but also as a transformative space that can move beyond the standard Orientalist models of addressing (single) women as “third world victims” to making sense of singleness as a living process—as also a response and challenge to hetero-patriarchy. Can communication in itself be transformative? Can the praxis of communication take us to the praxis of transformation?

The praxis of communication in the Sanghathan is not a simple matter of exchange of words, emotions, perspectives, or dissemination of information. Communication in the Sanghathan is about listening, reflecting, engaging, and learning. Women in this collective journey engage and rethink questions related to development, well-being, solidarity, rights, feminist consciousness, and politics, and these processes have been significant in building and strengthening voices of resistance. This ongoing work in the last five years has been an attempt toward reflecting on the relationship between, on the one hand, development and psychoanalysis, and on the other, the subject, the social, and the political in the context of the praxis of transformation and collective formation and action among adivasi single women (see Chitranshi, 2016) wherein communication has played a significant role and where communication is seen as an end in itself and not as a means to an end.

Moreover, building heavily upon the cultural resources, ethos, and value systems that tie them together, single women in the Sanghathan have been re-creating the logic and praxis of communicative ethics through the rebuilding and strengthening of relationalities among women (in a sense, the women feminized the praxis of communication by bringing in listening, understanding, empathy). At the same time, the praxis of communication in the Sanghathan helps women engender and transform relationalities. “Care of/for the other” is held in the highest regard, and continuous efforts are undertaken to maintain
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trust among each other. The collective repeatedly undertakes several processes in order to analyze and reflect upon group behavior, group functioning, communication patterns, power dynamics, external/internal influences, and so on. The group works without a "leader"; all the members of the collective form the core of the decision-making process. Different roles and responsibilities are fulfilled by taking turns that are in turn decided through consensus. The members labor together to keep the Sanghathan alive and simultaneously work toward mitigating power relations in order to arrive at a contingent emergent "being-in-common" in a nonhierarchized space. Sanghathan in this sense becomes a struggle between what Guattari calls "subjugated groups" and "group subjects."

Groups are subjugated no less by the leaders they assign themselves, or accept, than by the masses. The hierarchy, the vertical or pyramidal organization, which characterizes subjugated groups is meant to ward off any possible inscription of non-sense, death or dispersal, to discourage the development of creative ruptures, and to ensure the self-preservation mechanisms rooted in the exclusion of other groups. Their centralization works through structure, totalization, unification, replacing the conditions of a genuine collective "enunciation" with an assemblage of stereotypical utterances cut off both from the real and from subjectivity.

(Deleuze in Guattari, 2015, pp. 13–14)

Group subjects on the other hand are defined by "coefficients of transversality" that ward off totalitarianism and hierarchies. Guattari treats the question of "transference as vehicular" and takes it away from dual relations to group relations, as also from that of vertical hierarchies to horizontalities in an environment of desire. The much needed psychoanalytic turn in development communication thus gets tweaked further. We move from the question of the subject to the question of the group and collective, all the more because in contexts of developmental praxis one has to work with groups and collectives, especially women’s groups like the self-help groups and new social movement collectives like Eka Nari Sanghathan.

The question this work explores is how and whether Sanghathan will become group subjects. What would its relation be with subjugated groups? Would it itself end up becoming a subjugated group? Is the coefficient of transformation, then, in the coefficient of transversality? Is it in the tension between becoming subjugated groups (marked by the role of a synthesizer operating through totalization and exclusion) and becoming group subjects, where unification occurs through communication and participation? What does communication become in the process? Does it remain a mere means to an end, or does it become the process and an end in itself? Hitherto we have thought that groups require development communication to sustain and to function; however, while arguing for communication as not just a means but as an end in itself, we are also proposing that development communication requires a collective/group context; it requires an intersubjective relational space. Thus the praxis of communication and the praxis of collective becoming coconstitute each other. This is important because even in Eka Nari
Sanghathan one can see two tendencies. One is to coalesce into a subjugated group, with proto-fascist proclivities like excessive certainty, moral high-handedness, projecting out of blame, and so on, which, however, is a minor chord. The second is to blossom into a leaderless collective, where communication is more two-way/dialogic (and not mono-logic, one-way, top-down, and output oriented as in subjugated groups [see Morris, 2005]), horizontal, and process-oriented, where development communication endeavors are also attentive to the workings of the unconscious. This is the major chord in Eka Nari Sanghathan. However, what will emerge as the major or the minor will also depend on how communication is engendered in a group/collective and which kind of developmental model/frame is put to praxis. There is thus a close connection between the nature of the praxis of communication and the nature of the group that is forged.

**Conclusion: Communication, Culture, and Development**

What is it to look at “development” from a cultural studies perspective, not from an economics or sociological or political science angle? This article attempted to look at development from the question of “culture,” that is, flows of meaning, including questions of communication in

1. the dyadic situation (which is why the inauguration of the “logic of the two” in developmental praxis was fundamental; one had to move beyond the monist logic of the “p” and the “not-p”).
2. the question of the “subject”—both hegemonized and resisting—and the “personal dictionary” of the subject.
3. the question of the language and script of communication, including the question of
   a. the nontransparency.
   b. the two-layeredness of signification—the surface signification and the wax slab layer of the uncanny script and its apparent illegibility.
4. the question of a “theory of readability” in the praxis of development communication—reading for taboo-ed words, secret semiotics, and uncanny syntax.
5. the question of the “group” and the possibility of development communication in “group subject” situations and contexts, where communication births groups and groups facilitate communication.

What, then, is the connection between the “culture question” and the “developmental question”? Is communication the connection? What is culture in developmental contexts? What is the culture of development that communication endeavors are forging? Have there been significant turns in the culture of development as the world moves from welfarist to neoliberal forms of globalization? What role is communication playing in it? Is communication a question of technology? Or is it a human interrelational question, forging communicating collectives, engendering communicative ethics (as in the Eka Nari
Sanghathan)? In other words, what culture of communication is development forging? Is culture a question of techne? Or is culture a question of being, becoming, as also being-in-common? To conclude, this article has kept praxis as the connecting term or link between development and communication. Keeping praxis as the middle term, we have argued that it is the praxis of communication that engenders a certain culture of development. Top-down communication patterns—as observed in most state/government-run developmental interventions—engender a culture of development driven by the “logic of beneficence.” More horizontal, democratic, and participatory communication patterns—imbued with a culture of patient listening—make the praxis of development less hierarchical and less violent. The article has also argued that the nature of the praxis of development, in turn, engenders a certain culture of communication. The nature of the praxis of development—whether growth centric, income-generation centric, or human development centric—make the praxis of communication with communities either objectifying or respectful. The value given to the ideas, opinions, and perspectives as also the extant know-how and knowledge systems of communities determine one’s relationship to communities.

References


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**Notes:**

(1.) This article, however, does not take communicative reason/rationality as given. It acknowledges the need to “work through” (the idea of working through comes from psychoanalytic literature) the dialectic of reason and unreason, as also the dialectic of communication and miscommunication in all communicative endeavors. The article thus explores communication in its constitutive complexity. There will be more on this in later sections on the difficulty of communication, as well as on questions of *language* and *translation* as stumbling blocks in communication. This article does not take communication as a simple register pertaining to the workings of the conscious psyche and hence puts to question the standard operating procedure in developmental strategies around “consciousness raising” or “gender training.” What is it to conceptualize
communication after the psychoanalytic turn: where communication is haunted by *miscommunication* and where the question of the unconscious—the “unconscious structured like a language”—puts under erasure the simple logic of conscious communication and meaning-making through known language? The section on the Mystic Writing Pad (Freud, 1925) explores the two registers of language and script that haunt all efforts at communication.

(2.) A human being is endowed with a combination of “doings or beings”; Sen calls this *functioning*. Well-being is conceptualized by Sen as the quality of a human being’s living. Living is constitutive of a space of interrelated functionings that human beings value in doing or as being. If living is constituted by functionings then *capability* captures the freedom enjoyed by a human being to achieve well-being. Capability captures a human being’s freedom to enjoy one type of living over another represented by alternative combinations of functionings (of doings and beings). The actual freedom enjoyed by a human being is then represented by the human being’s capability to make a choice among different ways of living, that is, different combinations of doings and beings or functionings. One would enjoy greater freedom if one was capable of choosing a greater range of different ways of living that one values. Sen would define *development as freedom* in the form of an expansion of the capability of citizens to choose from a greater number of available combinations of functionings. We achieve greater development with greater freedom and reduced development if freedom is curtailed, in which case we encounter “capability truncation” or at worse “capability deprivation” qua poverty. “The capability approach clearly differs crucially from the more traditional approaches to individual and social evaluation, based on such variables as primary goods (as in Rawlsian evaluative system), resources (as in Dworkin’s social analysis), or real analysis (as in the analyses focusing on the GNP, GDP)” (see Sen, 1999, pp. 42, 46).

(3.) Dhar and Chakrabarti (2016) highlight Heidegger’s turn to *phronesis* and his turning away from *episteme* or *sophia* (pp. 572–574).

(4.) The master’s in philosophy program in development practice at Ambedkar University Delhi (http://www.cdp.res.in), which focuses on “communication with communities,” makes an attempt at returning to a forgotten tradition: *practical philosophy* as also to forgotten concepts: *phronesis* and *praxis*.

(5.) “Development practice in the so-called developing countries is ultimately rooted in colonialism and has therefore sometimes contained a good measure of paternalism, not to speak of arrogance and racism” (Hettne, 2009, p. 1).

(6.) This is however not to suggest that developmental practices and people’s negotiations with development are limited to the four mentioned forms. It is also not to suggest that this *synchronic* view of development is the only way one can conceptualize development. Hettne (2009) offers a *diachronic* view, that is, a “historical background to ‘the modern project’ of development” which is equally important and relevant. It moves through (a) the formation of the “European world system,” often discussed in terms of “transition” and “transformation” (1500 to 1750); (b) the birth of “European development
thinking” at the time of the Enlightenment, expressed in the metaphysical belief in “progress” (1750–1815); (c) industrialization (1815–1914); (d) the dark period (1914–1945) when the hegemonic development discourse was challenged by antiliberal interventionist ideologies, both rightist and leftist; (e) restoration of belief in progress leading to economic planning for reconstruction and welfare politics under the umbrella of U.S. hegemony, obsession with the “geopolitics of poverty,” concern with “underdevelopment” as a threat to “the free world”; (f) replacement of “developmentalist” ideas and demands for global justice by the policy of structural adjustment and “globalism” (1980–2008).

(7.) The Hindu

(8.) “Development has been the primary mechanism through which the Third World has been imagined and imagined itself, thus marginalizing or precluding other ways of seeing and doing. . . . The making of the Third World through development discourses and practices has to be seen in relation to the larger history of Western modernity, of which development seems to be one of the last and most insidious chapters” (Escobar in Crush, 2005, pp. 206–207). This paper argues that world of the third is another way of seeing what has hitherto been designated third world and the formation of the Eka Nari Sanghathan (see penultimate section titled “Development Communication as Ground for Transformative Social Praxis”) as another way of doing. Development communication is crucial to this doing.

(9.) “In the formative period of development studies, the 1950s and the 1960s, the strategy of development was country-based and the state the main agent, supposedly guided by development theory. Often this guidance was based on ‘development ideology’, or interest-based development doctrines . . . Not long ago development was identified with globalization and economic interdependence, globalism [1980–2008] being the underlying ideology. At present the development problem is rather to restore some order in the globalized world economy. In the future the main challenge will be to handle financial disorder, climate change, and what seems to be escalating into ‘global civil war’. The long-term problems are becoming increasingly global, to be managed by new institutions of global governance” (Hettne, 2009, p. 5). In this article, we redraw the cartograph of globalism in terms of, on the one hand, the crisscrossing “circuits of global capital” and, on the other, its outside: world of the third (which builds on the idea of the resisting “local” but which is not the local per se).

(10.) “Development, to paraphrase Harvey (1993), and alternative development are dialectically organized oppositions within the history of modernity, to be seen less as mutually exclusive but as “oppositions that contain the other” (Harvey, 1993, p. 15) (see Watts in Crush, 2005, p. 59). Escobar has a different take on alternatives: “to think about ‘alternatives to development’ . . . [marked by] a critical stance with respect to established scientific knowledge, an interest in local autonomy, culture and knowledge, and the defence of localized, pluralistic grassroots movements . . . requires a theoretical and practical transformation in existing notions of development, modernity and the economy.
This can best be achieved by building upon the practices of the social movements, especially those in the Third World. These movements are essential to the creation of alternative visions of democracy, economy and society” (Escobar in Crush, 2005, p. 206). Some social movements are concerned with “resource mobilization”; some others “emphasize struggles to constitute new identities as a means to open democratic spaces for more autonomous action” (Cohen, 1985, as quoted by Escobar in Crush, 2005, p. 215). In this article, we present the work of Eka Nari Sanghathan as one such social movement.

(11.) The main purposes of the dialogic model can be divided into broad types of applications: (a) communication to assess and (b) communication to empower (Mefalopulos, 2008, p. 23).

(12.) “The recovery of the other selves of cultures and communities, selves not defined by the dominant global consciousness, may turn out to be the first task of social criticism and political activism and the first responsibility of intellectual stock-taking in the first decades of the coming century” (Nandy, 1989, p. 265).

(13.) The Mystic (Writing) Pad is a slab of dark brown resin or wax with a work edging. Over the slab is laid a thin transparent sheet; it itself consists of two layers that can be detached from each other except at their two ends. The upper layer is a transparent piece of celluloid; the lower layer is made of thin translucent waxed work. To make use of the Mystic (Writing) Pad one writes upon the celluloid portion of the covering sheet that rests upon the waxed slab. No pencil or chalk is necessary, since the writing does not depend on material being deposited upon the receptive surface. A pointed stylus scratches the surface; the depressions constitute the “writing.” At the points that the stylus touches, it presses the lower surface of the waxed work on to the wax slab, and the grooves are visible as dark writing upon the otherwise smooth whitish gray surface of the celluloid. If one wishes to destroy what one has written, all that is necessary is to raise the double covering sheet from the wax slab; the close contact between the waxwork and the wax slab at the places, which have been scratched (upon which the visibility of the writing depended) is thus brought to an end. The Mystic Pad is now clear of writing and ready to receive fresh inscriptions.

(14.) The experience of Immersion in the village and in a host household for 10 months brings to developmental practice the required depth of communication and intensity of a relationship between action researcher and community.

(15.) The action researcher had to not just learn Odiya or Kuvi. The action researcher had to also learn the language of the Kondha adivasi (inadequately translated as tribe, indigenous people, etc.) worldview.

(16.) This work does not intend to romanticize adivasi culture, ethos, and values as one remains aware of the inherent antagonisms, conflicts, discriminations, and marginalizations that are part of Kondhaadivasi life-world. But it builds upon the disaggregated nature of adivasi society, which has a lot to offer us in terms of rethinking
and co-creating ethico-political values, transformative praxis, and communicative relationalities.

(17.) Transversality in Guattari is inaugurated as a new concept replacing the ambiguous idea of the institutional transference. “The idea of transversality is opposed to: (a) verticality, as described in the organogramme of a pyramidal structure (leaders, assistants, etc.); (b) horizontality, as it exists in the disturbed wards of a hospital, or, even more, in the senile wards; in other words a state of affairs in which things and people fit in as best they can with the situation in which they find themselves. . . . Transversality is a dimension that tries to overcome both the impasse of pure verticality and that of mere horizontality: it tends to be achieved when there is maximum communication among different levels and, above all, in different meanings” (Guattari, 2015, pp. 112–113).

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