

The urgent need to construct a new narrative¹

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Introduction

In the desire for survival, facing the scrutiny that development is under every day, a new suit has recently been added to its wardrobe: social change. We are facing another problem of self-interested definitions and usages concerning an idea with no concrete direction. Development has a long history of dressing up in different clothes and is constantly looking for new suits that it uses as camouflage in its efforts to perpetuate its work. Time justifies the critics of development and as disasters become more evident there is some urgency to call this self-induced illness into question and to sustain new models that bring us closer to a life far away from the dystopia in which we are living.

If we are to construct the critical elements that are necessary to perceive new pathways, a new narrative is called for that recovers the real meaning of things and that puts an end to anthropocentric culture and knowledge constructed by rationalism. Development and communication for development have been the building blocks for the transmission of ideas that place human beings in different states, without recognizing the rights of different cultures that evolved over hundreds and thousands of years adapting to ecosystems. Moreover, without recognizing that inequality is produced by a desire for enrichment at the cost of the other defined as poor.

There is a dictatorship of development, which must be dismantled, semantically redefined with new meanings, looking at human beings as integrated in ecosystems that they nourish and that nourishes them. Good living is not only a political slogan, or the product of an Andean-Amazonian cosmovision, it is the original essence of all cultures that we must rescue. The idea of happiness as realization of the self and ambition linked to material elements as representing it, remains nothing other than fiction that must be dismantled. If happiness is the objective, it is neither in development nor in the romantic myth of the construction of self, in the words of Grey: “What in reality happens is that the majority of people pass their lives in a promising state of agitation. They find meaning in the suffering that is entailed in the fight for happiness. In their modern flight, there is nothing to which modern

¹ Rewritten text by the author of Chapter 6 of his book *Claves para repensar los medios y el mundo que habitamos. La distopía del desarrollo* [Keys to rethink the media and the world that we inhabit. The dystopia of development], Desde Abajo, Bogota, 2014.

humanity is so attached than to this state of happy sadness” (2014). The model is based on these sorts of mental constructions, propagated by the media and an educational system based on acritical knowledge.

Communication as a democratic process cannot continue to be linked to such a vacuous concept as development, whose economic, political, and cultural proposals engender guidelines bereft of universalizable values. The simple idea that we can all come to live under the same standards of consumption, however much it is preached, is as unfeasible as promoting developmentalist governments in impoverished countries, knowing full well that the helping hand of modern-day colonialism never bringing their people out of misery is tantamount to genocide. So that one part of the world improves and has real capabilities for democratic government, the other must change and is forced to modify its growth-based economy, take charge of and acknowledge the high costs incurred for the planet and the externalities of its economic model. The systems of colonialism and neo-colonialism have constructed a world of hitherto inexistant impoverished people.

Any change that is a bid for survival should lead to a new economic model that some defend as degrowth and that implies, among many other things, no longer contributing to the voluminous production of inorganic non-reabsorbable waste, prolonging the life of goods and their reuse, favouring both the local and the real economy, placing limits on usury, eliminating the unnecessary consumption of superfluous goods, and rearranging the distribution of work to facilitate universal access to the goods that are needed for living well.

Degrowth must not imply loss of rights or rolling back welfare, arguing principles of suicidal austerity as the self-interested discourse of the political right-wing would have it, facing what they call an economic crisis. If degrowth of the economy is happening now, it is not because of the application of new policies, but because there is no satisfaction whatsoever with the consequences of impoverishment and loss of rights. Neither is there satisfaction to continue with the amassing of wealth by a minority and the indebtedness of the population in the face of unjustified cuts to salaries.

The problem, as Vicenç Navarro and Juan Torres have been saying, is the proposed model of growth, because in reality the debate is whether the term degrowth implies a different form of growth in satisfaction maintaining the natural balance, to continue living a long way away from both technological and material determinism, in areas where rights, equality, and harmony are prioritized.

In principle, both economists showed their disagreement with the use of the term degrowth and the most radical proposals, although their proposals illuminated the need for a change in the model. It is possible the term degrowth may cause confusion, but in short it serves to advance a model in outright opposition to unjust and anti-natural growth that capitalism proposes. The abandonment of capitalist growth is suggestive, on the contrary, of a different, non-consumerist sort of growth, resting on non-anthropocentric science, not at the service of speculative capital. The current model is based on a rationalism that speculates with knowledge and submits it to the utility of a single being, but human beings are not the masters of the natural world and the preservation of ecosystems is as vital to them for survival as it is to all other species. Human beings must therefore seek equity and redistribution of wealth in harmony with the environment.

The need to transform our present model is confused, at times in a self-

interested manner, with the demand for change promoted by development to reach its ends. Development demands and imposes a social change as essential, the change of models that hinder the objectives of development to enable its own expansion. We already know though that it is not only impossible but also tremendously destructive. The contributions of other cultures, of other ways of life, as well as the finite limits of the planet are neither acknowledged nor recognized as valid in this model. In no way does development intervene in the accumulation of goods and capital, and financial speculation. It is the government of the macroeconomy magnified by the mass media.

In these ways of resisting, the principal problem that we face today for recognizing and denouncing the real problems of development may be found in the role that the media play and have played in the contamination of the semiosphere. The place where we construct meanings and ideas. The media have contributed to the construction of imaginary that have led to disdain towards other cultures and their exile, if not to their definitive extermination, with all the loss of knowledge that might imply.

The mission of communication for development has as a function held indoctrination in the faith of capital over and above any principle of dignity and consideration of Human Rights (HR). In our globalized planet, ambitions constructed around consumption are shared more than spaces of vital learning and life that we may inhabit in harmonious peace. In the same way as the Muscovites ironically affirmed in the days of the Soviet Union that no news could be found in the newspaper *Pravda* (the Truth) and that there was no truth in *Izvestia* (the News), we may affirm that this reality extends to all media. Their truths and their news coincide less and less with reality in an attempt to negate the misguided direction of the planet or to look elsewhere at all costs.

As criticism of development gained support in view of the evident failures, the language was inflated with pleonasms as camouflage, so that they might continue to defend capitalist interests: sustainable development, human development, local development, endogenous development, social development, alternative, community, autonomous, green... They are all part of the same imaginary, they are curtains that distract, in order to confuse, which the corporations, international bodies, among which the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), use to maintain and to justify investments and activities that provide immense benefits exclusively for their promoters. As Latouche (2007) said, the different qualifications are none other than pleonasms: "When adding an adjective to the concept of development, capitalist accumulation is not called into question. At most, an attempt is made to incorporate a social concept in economic growth, as it might before have been possible to add a cultural dimension, and today an ecological component". Having created the justificatory pleonasm, media marketing takes charge of spreading it, embellishing it with new virtues, constructing illusions that go beyond true changes to the way of doing and thinking.

Sometime before the present-day crisis of "developed" countries, it was already acknowledged in the 1998 UNDP Human Development report that while the wealth of the planet had multiplied by six since 1950, "No fewer than 100 countries all developing or in transition have experienced serious economic decline over the past three decades [...]". According to the 2001 report, the fifth richest part of the

global population possesses 86 % of global GDP, set against 1 % of the poorest! [...] Under these conditions in the South, one cannot even begin to speak of development as such, but only of structural adjustment, austerity plans imposed by the IMF to re-establish the solvency of indebted countries through illusory development projects” (Latouche 2007). A critique easily applicable today to Europe itself, where economic growth stopped contributing to lowering the scandalous unemployment, which has coined a new term: *jobless growth*. It defines growth without unemployment (Linz, Reichmann and Sempere 2007) and, logically, with no redistribution of profits.

Communication for Social Change?

The last acrobatic leap has been the use of the term “Communication for Social Change”. It could not be otherwise, because the development agenda, as we have said, demands and promotes social change. However revolutionary the term might be, through the lens of “development”, it is still the same essence of a forceful modernizing commitment imposed by capitalism. We have heard of the redeeming change of strategy proposed by Rostow, as well as its nefarious consequences. The change towards development would come from the hand of a process of disseminating innovation, from the questioning of traditional societies, and their comparison with that modern world that must be reached.

The change driven by the USA transformed the meaning of the word development, which from having an evolutive, naturalist, and cultural meaning, was given an economic connotation. The changes that were pursued should come through an economic transformation in which all possible resources are used, among which the information and communications media.

Multinationals have been and are behind the strategy. Hence, the first applications of development policies were carried out in the Middle East and a little later in Latin America. Two regions that were rich in energetic resources and raw materials that had to be controlled. The Middle East sought to nationalize oil and popular movements and the cultural elites questioned US policies in South America. Cuba was the example to avoid at all costs. The desires of Che to export the revolution throughout the continent worried the economic interests of multinationals. Thus, the agenda for change promoted the paradigm of development to inaugurate an age where the sole objective of communication was centred on propaganda against the enemy through the dissemination of modernity guaranteed by consumer satisfaction.

Voices critical of the present-day model have made communication move in two opposing directions: the utilitarian tradition, present in the large-scale media, promoted by the market and governments, that continues defending worn-out positions; and the popular-social tradition, claiming a new society, opposed to the arguments of transnationals and their servile directors. This second option is clearly linked to community or associative communication.

The so-called third or not-for-profit sector, civil society, active citizenship, aware of the need to recover its protagonism, has been constructing communicative models for decades, directed at maintaining the democratic pulse and the recovery of values. As Víctor Marí reminded us, the Tiers État of the French Revolution inspired Marc Nerfin in the 1970s, the decade of the first critiques of development,

to reaffirm public activism in the management of “public questions” (2011). Today, the Third Sector has come to define and to encompass organized and combative public movements against the developmentalist model. In the media of the Third Sector, the concept of development has ceded the dimension of centrality to the revindication of basic rights, cultural identity, and a new cosmovision of life, which now occupies a preferential place, without renouncing the fight against inequality. It could be a question of another sort of development, as some authors have said, but two very different conceptualizations for one and the same word hardly fit.

A study undertaken by CAMECO (2012) revealed that the role of community radios as actors of local development only appears as the third objective in their priorities, of less importance than interest in informing and educating. Understanding, in addition, that in most cases they equate development with wellbeing; detaching the macroeconomy that paints another reality. Development no longer enjoys the meaning of “goodness” as it is presented in economic policies, stemming from and imposed by the IMF and the WB, implementing the interests of corporations, because it has been unmasked. The answer of those disinherited by the society of “opportunities” overlooks priorities that are not contemplated by development.

The life stories of 18 Latin-American community radios are narrated in the documentary *Distorsións Armónica* [Harmonic distortions] (2009). In a script related by the voices of the protagonists, the discourse makes almost no mention of the word development. Only once is it mentioned and clearly with no economic link. It is clear that the priorities place little emphasis on the reestablishment of rights and networked relations that facilitate, not the right to life, but as José Luis Sampedro put it, the right to live life.

The soyabean industry in Argentina in the name of development calls for the cultivation of lands, the ancestral rights of which are recognized in the Constitution as belonging to the original indigenous peoples. The peasants of Santiago del Estero defend their traditional crops, because it is what they eat and they prefer to say no to easy money than to promote agro-business. None of them have been to university and their studies go no further than primary school, but natural and empirical intelligence born from their relation with the earth makes them defend their rights, positioning themselves against development: “nothing that development brings is good, it is the destruction of our culture and way of life”. Their children go to a school, but one that they had to construct, they have access to health care, but health care that they have organized, and through their radio they defend themselves from the attacks of commercial media that criminalize them for being “backward” and for not wanting development. There is no doubt that they have properly identified what development means. When touching on reality, when able to immerse oneself in it, academic doubts and research, seeking to continue discussion through library books, disappear. Academia has for some time been lost in a meritocracy that lives in endogamy and shows itself to be unable to overcome the obtuse frontiers in which it moves, measuring knowledge with mere cumulative criteria, by its weight.

Among the most interesting notes to retain are those of the master, Díaz Bordenave, who affirmed that: “It is necessary to overcome old conceptions of development that make it equivalent to modernization and technical development,

as well as the imitation of patterns of life and consumption of first world countries”². Erick Torrico was more striking and expressive when affirming that: “The West” –Europe and the United States of North America, successively- was taken as a universal civilizing reference. In the 1960s, the theories of modernization were criticized in Latin America and the dissemination of innovations. Later on, “the West” revitalized its Euro-centric notion of development with political objectives and practical limits that are increasingly evident. Today, it is necessary to abandon that notion and to substitute “communication for development” for “communication to leave development” (2013).

The questions at stake have favoured an about-turn to keep the ideal of development alive: social change. A slogan that appears to be in good health, because of the meaning of innovation-revolution that the concept supposedly entails, but as we know these signifiers also refer to situations of inversion.

In the challenging context in which social movements function today, the concept of change is, logically, upheld with no further considerations than seeking out an evolution towards objectives that are opposed to the market, whether it is a matter of 15-M activism, of Occupy (Wall Street among other places), of the struggles of peasants, and indigenous movements. However, in communication, the social change that promotes the development agenda is travelling in a different direction. The passion that word change evokes is of sufficient force of attraction to be capable of hiding the reality of the proposal. The acceptance of any proposal for change calls for the definition of its purpose, dismantling its ideological fixations and unmasking strategies for change linked and reoriented towards immobility.

In 1977, the new strategy, promoted by the Rockefeller Foundation following the strategy of the project “Change” of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), began by emulating the 1940s when the Foundation placed Lazarsfeld in charge of departmental research into communication. The objective was to retake control of communication for development which had lost its direction and, of course, to replace the strategies of international cooperation for development.

Curiously, in the first approaches, a critical analysis was conducted on the imposition of Western beliefs and more was said of the importance of generating processes of communication than of promoting the empowerment of citizenship. Insistence was placed on the idea of taking decisions freely, of generating participative processes, although the ethnocentric position that the ideal to reach was the way of life of Western society was never abandoned. The slogan continued to be “without communication there is no development”; in other words, there is no improvement in the quality of life. A vision that is as naïve as it is perverse, which might appear to accept the existence of a bad development and another good one, as if the same model of economic growth were reformable to the utmost content of everybody.

In 1969, the report of the Nobel Peace Prize winner and economist, Lester Pearson, sponsored by the World Bank, (Pearson Report) was published. The conclusion was devastating: since the first concession of loans in cooperation

² Chaparro, M.: “La última entrevista a Juan Díaz Bordenave, la mirada crítica y la voluntad insobornable” available at www.com-andalucia.org. 2011

policies in 1947 up until the date of the report, the gap between rich and poor, enriched and impoverished, had increased in scandalous proportions. Among the initiatives that Pearson proposed was the contribution with 0.7% of GDP in aid of the wealthier countries to the impoverished countries, a recommendation that was never met.

The experts concluded, on the contrary, that for each dollar lent, at least two were collected, worsening the economic situation of the debtor countries. In 2001, a series of meetings took place at the headquarters of the Rockefeller Foundation in Bellagio (Italy), to propose measures to stimulate communication for social change, as the new name, and to establish the so-called “map of competencies” of the communicators for development and change (but, what change?). Although committed communicators participated in it, such as Luis Ramiro Beltrán, Díaz Bordenave, and Rosa María Alfaro, deeply convinced of the democratizing importance of participative communication, the term “social change” without excessive enthusiasm finally triumphed. Nobody could see what the new contribution was, nor whether a sharp turn was needed in some direction: social change continued to be for development! But development was neither reformulated, nor redefined as some might have liked; a question that was moreover impossible.

The proposal was taken to the World Conference of Communication for Development, held in Rome in 2006, a summit with restricted access at which few citizenship groups wishing to offer their perspective were permitted to participate. The Conference was promoted by the World Bank, the FAO and, once again, the Rockefeller Foundation, in reality acting in the name of USAID. Finally, the Conference generalized the use of the term “social change” to promote the context of development. The final conclusion of Rome could be summarized, in so far as communication is strategic in development projects and it is the tool to achieve (no less than) the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). It is like using the virus that is the cause of the illness with all of its potential consequences as a vaccine. The MDG are unreachable goals, not because of the present economic landscape, but because of the failure of a model that has no wish to recognize that development is reproducible, but not universalizable.

The fundamental problem of the new objective of the term is that the meaning of the word “change” is not moving in any one specific direction and can be promoted from many considerations across the ideological spectrum. In this case, the social change that USAID promotes is described as the need to seek out patterns of economic growth to promote development.

Communication for Social Change is also defined in terms of the mission to seek out “help” for companies considered under-developed or backward. Backward in what way? In not living in accordance with Western schemes of consumption? In not having designed survival strategies to resist colonial aggression? In not having modified, or even destroyed their ecosystems before the arrival of the white man? In accepting a system of insane and egoistical competitiveness? Western culture has many reasons of which to be proud, but also many to make it feel ashamed and this is one of them. What is the change for the Pacahuaras and who has the urgent need for change?³

³ In 2010, the women of the Pacahuara people, inhabitants of Bolivia on the frontier with Brazil, declared that they would reproduce no longer, after having been expelled from their lands by the government of Banzer, the logging

The strategy is summarized in the declaration that is found on the web sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation:

“We are using the term communication for social change as a useful way of organizing and thinking. This work is based on a simple premise: it is possible to find effective ways of using the discipline of communication to contribute to accelerating the rhythm of development. We know that when communication is converted into an integral element of the process of development and when it is intelligently implemented, the development process is more sustainable. We also think that intense work of spreading the word is necessary to contribute to communication, so that it is accepted as the integral factor within the development process”²⁴.

Although this other version that the Foundation made public in 1999 was more seductive:

“By social change we understand a change in the life of a social group, in accordance with the parameters established by that same group. This approximation especially seeks to improve the lives of marginalized groups (both politically and economically), and is guided by the principles of tolerance, self-determination, equity, social justice and the active participation of all concerned”.

There are between the first and the second notable differences and even contradictions, although a shared parentage that does not distance them from interventions, as they try to define who the marginalized groups are that lack indispensable values.

Curiously, these contradictory definitions tend to confuse but, on the other hand, they serve both to satisfy the developmentalists and those who unfurl the banner of social change as an authentic change of model. In what terms are the aforementioned paradigms of development modified to justify this change? Really, what change? Whoever hopes that a real change of paradigm will emerge from the context of Communication for Social Change is mistaken, we are facing a new mask that hides the real face.

It may be added to this problem of indefinitions, as the Bolivian research Karina Herrera says, that the concept of social change is today “as ambiguous as its varied

magnate, Mabet, and with the support of USAID. The unhappiness and misery to which they were subjected led them to take the decision to carry no new lives faced with the only perspective of having to abandon their life and their culture, divorced of meaning without the forest they inhabited. In 2007, a report produced by the ONG *Rainforest Alliance* sponsored by USAID, recommended to the Bolivian government that Mabet pay no taxes and that the interests of the logger over a territory of some 122,744 hectares be protected from indigenous “pillagers”. In 2011, the courts sided with the logging magnate, arguing that the plaintiffs, the indigenous Pacahuara people, were represented by imposters who had never inhabited those lands. What the majority of the media said was that progress cannot be stopped, that resources are necessary for the development of the country. Progress?

⁴ Sourced from documentation on programmes posted on: www.comminit.com, sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation and USAID (2010).

approaches and perspectives”. “The attempt to delimit what could be communication for social change appears to contain as much polysemic charge as the notion of communication for “development”. If we trace back the origins of the concept of social change, we observe that it emerged from positivism and functional-structuralist sociology that defined it as the capability of a system to innovate itself, which is to say its possibilities of inserting new elements”⁵ (2008).

The terminological ambiguity is mimicked to perfection with the development agenda. An argument with which Jamias (1975) coincided when he affirmed that “the word change is a “neutral” term; it can go in a positive or a negative direction. [...] Even more so, the word change ignores the fact that no change could take place at all, at least from the perspective of the communication specialist”.

Supported in the “initiative for social change” promoted by the Rockefeller Foundation, Alfonso Gumucio, narrated the interesting experience of Pastapur in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, in a documentary where it showed the life of “illiterate” women of the *dalit* caste, the untouchables. These women, with the support of university activists, equipped themselves with communication tools, video and radio, to escape from their condition of social and economic discrimination. They documented their ancestral knowledge on medicine, such as: natural remedies to fight diphtheria, fever, infections, and diarrhoea. Their agricultural techniques were strengthened through the creation of a seed bank to ensure their food sufficiency and their culture. Communication has been a catalyser and a transversal element, has strengthened them to leave a situation of marginality and impoverishment. These activities led them to remove Monsanto transgenic cotton seed from their region, in a victory of international transcendence without precedence supported by the activist movement Vandana Shiva, against the destruction of natural resources within India and sources of life because of the exploitation of corporations.

The autonomy and the independence they have won have converted these women into a global example of the importance of communication in the processes of endogenous appropriation. A significant change has taken place, there is no doubt, but in the opposite direction to the one development follows. This achievement is there to expose the discrimination to which they have been subjected, within a context of extreme social inequality, in which only the elites enjoy the “success” of capitalism, but in this struggle, they have unmasked the strategies of dependence and development and have real alternatives.

The real result is that their model of communication has given them the necessary empowerment to feel dignity for the first time in their lives. These women have sought a decent, self-sufficient way of life in solidarity with each other; their simplicity and harmonious daily life constitutes a rejection of economic growth as a philosophy of life. In what way does “developed” society resemble what these women, through empirical and natural knowledge, have known how to create? The conquest of these women recalls many other examples of empowerment inspired through communication strategies, such as that of peasant women of Atipiri in the city of El Alto, in the work of Tania and Donato Ayma, who are now reporters who take the word and narrate their reality every day over

⁵ Communication for social change: the challenge of generating new meanings to reach the persistent Utopia. Conferencia of Karina Herrera at the International Seminary on Communication and Cooperation, held at the Catholic University (La Paz) in collaboration with the University of Malaga in June 2008.

the airwaves, making their voices heard and transforming their reality and their environment. Before silent and badly treated, now social activists who rebel and reflect over the airwaves; proposing ideas. In the same way as the youth of el Alto do through stories on the radio in which they are the protagonists and the old people, recounting their memories.

If we wish to speak of change, let us do so through the decolonization of the imaginary that has marked history over the past seventy years. If we cannot arrive at a clear political definition of the kind of change that is sought, we will continue supporting a Communication for Social Change that reproduces those same injustices that it is meant to end. We believe we pursue development and we are unable to see that it is development that is pursuing us.

Social change is itself another object of study when it happens, more so than a method to approach areas of study. Although, those who uphold communication for social change take the strategies that Bernays had in some way designed as a reference, with a suite that is not a new one: founding change on the propaganda stimulating Eurocentric superiority. Speaking of communication for social change marks a mistaken strategy, it is not an innovation for those who with greater certainty, in a complicated historical time, reason the importance of communication as a catalyser of social evolution towards democracy and social equality. The only inconvenience is that the paradigm of development, as a leitmotiv, was still betraying that ideal.

New forms of confusion are fed among those who speak of social change, pointing to a definition-mode. Communication for development has already been understood since the first premises of Lasswell, Schramm, Lerner, Ithiel de Sola, Rogers and their contemporaries as a communication for social change. The so-called 'new' Communication for social change is meant to be a redefinition with no critique of development and its original premises, but seeking to formulate a "new notion", preparing a "new generation of specialized communicators dedicated to the principles and values of participative communication for social change" (Barranquero 2008) for intervention in "under-developed areas".

The hegemonic perpetuation of knowledge of traditional academia resituates the geopolitics of knowledge to determine profiles that give continuity to the deep-seated interference of development agencies as benefactors, when transposing Western values as the only valid values. They are not learning how to listen to popular social movements and their real alternatives, not even specialized NGOs that have for years been working in cooperation with communication activists and their social organizations. How distant are these conjectures that are of no use to them and that contribute to background noise. Academia should, rather more, concern itself with the decolonization of imposed knowledge, the ideological deconstruction of development premises to recover communication and journalism as essentially human activities and to promote policies in that direction; only in that way will we obtain, with no confusion, the results of the justice that is pursued; criticizing and constructing through dialogue.

Valuing and respecting the new efforts of goodness that may be in this new endeavour of constructive criticism, and among them our dear friend, Alfonso Gumucio, one of its principal references; it is essential to unify efforts between communication researchers and activists, so as not to repeat in a contradictory manner the way in which development is once again reclaimed. If the process of

change seeks to construct scales of social priorities, the priority cannot be founded on a previously failed model. In the end, we are up against the paradigm that the prince of Lampedusa set down in *Il Gattopardo* [The Leopard]: “If we want everything to stay as it is, everything has to change”.

Communication and empowerment

A basic principle of communication resides in knowing how to listen, just as both observation and doubt are essential in science. In our case, they appear to be premises that have not been taken into account; hence we continue to base our knowledge on an environment that we consider optimal to be exported, promoting changes even when these are not found among the needs of other social models and certainly not in the models that flow from them.

This is the reality of many peoples, for whom a principle of change is not set out, at least in the terms that western culture proposes.

What change do the Pacahuaras need in their lives? No change is sought in their model of society and human relations, but instead the ecosystem is to be maintained to preserve a way of life. What change do those who were not contacted seek? Really, they are the ones who need the world to change, so that they can be left to live in models that deserve respect, understanding, and knowledge among equals to favour a voluntary exchange of mutual adoptions. This reality affects many cultures that have seen their way of life destroyed. Development is not a principle subject to universal rights, nor is the social change that it proposes.

Alongside the indigenous peoples, for whom the daily drama has no end, development is likewise rejected by those who see its consequences within Western society itself, generating rejection and a new voluntarism; people who declare themselves out of contact, renouncing development. An active position as against any immobilism-based change that continues to promote development and, in short, as against this model of social change supported by the WB, whose sole objective is to sustain the health of capital, and in which so few never lived with so great a disdain towards the others. The aspiration to have no contact with development might be for many the only sense of social transformation, of recovery of the road towards evolutive models of life in accordance with the environments that we inhabit, without converting nature into our enemies or the element to be subjugated. Something that peasant movements interpret, practice, and revindicate in their defence of the right to land and food sovereignty.

The signs from which to create the new priorities point to the need within the local environment to manage the generation of sufficient economic resources that have social repercussions and that are respectful of the ecosystem. A more local and self-sufficient economy, facilitating governance that transcends the individual and the collective and that permits the construction of a global model showing greater solidarity, non-dependent collaborative societies, respectful of Human Rights and the Earth. A lasting model, because sustainable can be no more than “sustained”, a fleeting dance that seeks to maintain its equilibrium on tiptoes for some brief moments.

In conclusion, even considering that the media must be agents of change and support for development, why do the majority of countries promote restrictive legislations on the existence of associative, community, and community media,

and insistently seek their closure in response to the complaints from the private commercial sector? It will certainly be because they are suspected of promoting democratic ideals, a liberalizing communication that enters into collision with the interests of capitalism and the immobilism that this promotes. A change is necessary, but if we are ideologically unable to define it, pointing to a direction other than the one promoted by the principal promoters of development, it will be better to avoid confusion, validating the importance of communication as a paradigm for the construction of democracy through participation, consensus, and conflict resolution in collective and local decision-making that is not imposed. The most moving of all is that it is still thought, in some sectors, that defending social change is standing up to the injustices of development.

Why not speak in a straightforward way of Communication for Post-development and Communication for Degrowth? It would undoubtedly be more logical, it would help to modify the imaginaries upon which formal education has been placed, and an anti-natural way of life in conflict with the Planet. It would imply a rupture with the past and an about-turn of 180 degrees in our evolutive inertia as a species.

When speaking of degrowth, it must be taken into account that it is not only a matter of an ideological rupture with earlier paradigms, it is a rupture that entails a new map of socio-economic and geographic interventions, a NEW NARRATIVE opposed to the dictionary compiled in the interests of development. What post-development proposes is quite the contrary to what development entails: degrowth as against capitalist growth. Although as we have made clear, the term degrowth can lead to self-interested misinterpretations, in reality a model is proposed that seeks to establish limits to production, eliminating unnecessary consumption. It is not, therefore, a renouncement of economic principles that must lead to wellbeing, the distribution of work, and the wealth that work generates.

The transformations that are proposed are not to do so much with the “under-developed” or “backward” parts of the planet, but with obese society, the society of consumerism, and the unnecessary fleecing of resources for the life of other peoples. Post-development requires the introduction of changes among developed peoples not among the impoverished, as development seeks to do, recovering the logic of a healthy and harmonious life, so that the resources of the planet may be shared and so that Human Rights, in its most intercultural and wholistic sense, may really be approved.

Communication for Degrowth and Post-development imply recognizing that that the changes for the planet to recover its harmony must be introduced into the developed societies of any country defined as consumerist, living off inequality and the impoverishment of its neighbours. It is not necessary to continue striving to use communication to transfer modes, styles of life, and consumer habits that ruin life.

The name Communication for Post-development or Degrowth might be the right one for the transformative initiative that it implies, as much as Communication for Empowerment and Communication can be for Eco-society, in terms of bio-economics. A concept defined by Georgescu-Roegen in which all economic activity must contribute to the wellbeing of nature in which human beings are found as a species, not to its destruction, so all acts must be “bio-economic”.

What is really basic, in order to set a new political and social agenda in motion, is to pin down the true, intimate, and universal revolutionary meaning of the word communication. If true communication is democratic, because of the horizontality of its exchanges, the only certain thing is that this communication is turned into a factor for public empowerment for the construction of more equitable societies, capable of both local and global transcendence in a desire to coexist in and with the planet. In this sense, it would be even more accurate to revindicate Communication with the objective of facilitating empowerment following the postulates of Freire. Communication facilitates reflection, conscientization, action, empowerment. A Communication for Empowerment would quite certainly mark out the path of decolonialization as proposed in post-development. Perhaps, in view of those who are confused, it may be more useful to maintain a surname in the communication: in this case empowerment, eco-social, post-development, and degrowth, are names that better identify the objectives and that will mark the distance with traditional communication for development.

What is now urgent is to start to know how to narrate reality through a narrative that is against the indoctrination of the system, which rejects terminological perversion through which our daily life is constructed, approaching the profound ecological transformations arising from climate change, and the consequent injustice to which we have subjected our existence in the acceptance of dystopian thought and ideology.

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