

## **Gumucio-Dagron, Alfonso and Thomas Tufte . Communication for Social Change Anthology: Historical and Contemporary Readings**

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Gumucio-Dagron, Alfonso and Thomas Tufte (Eds). *Communication for Social Change Anthology: Historical and Contemporary Readings*. South Orange, NJ: Communication for Social Change Consortium, 2006. Pp. xxxvi, 1067. ISBN 0-9770357-9-4 (pb.) \$120.00.

This double volume of collected readings about development and social change comes from a group devoted to bring about social change through communication. The Communication for Social Change Consortium has been working for almost a decade to bring a fresh perspective to development projects by emphasizing peoples' participation in solving their own problems. This hefty volume is a collection of readings on communication for social change that are both historical and contemporary (Part 1, historical readings, covers pages 1-629; Part 2, contemporary readings, covers pages 630-1045); the readings run the gamut from Wilbur Schramm and Everett Rogers to contemporary topics of global digital media in the new millennium. In a useful overview of the volume (pp. xiv-xxvi), the editors sum up the two parts and provide a rationale for the editing decisions. Most the readings are excerpts from longer articles, chapters or books, but some few are complete articles or chapters. The challenge, of course, for the reader is to make sense of this rich collection of thought spanning almost 80 years and hundreds of authors and entries (some entries are one page, others as much as 15). The reader who can best take advantage of this volume is either a researcher or a practitioner who has had experience and can seek out those readings that best suit specific needs. Like the field of communication for development and social change itself, this volume cannot be summarized neatly into a few simple theories, policies, or best practices. But the richness of the menu and the current strong interest from millennium goals seekers suggest that this hefty volume will serve a useful purpose to both academic, policy, and application interests.

Academics in communication studies have neglected the field of development and social change for the past two decades or more and have only recently reentered the field through current debates over digital divides and globalization. The historical readings from Schramm, Rogers, Beltran, Freire, Mattelart, Bordenave, Schiller, and others all suggest flourishing theoretical debates from the 1950s through the 1970s, dividing the field into camps but providing data and discussion about how communication changes societies for better or worse. The issues discussed in the historical readings are numerous and touch on issues of culture as well as economics, on structure as well as ideology, on theory as well as practice (or praxis), on power as well as planning. The choice of readings in this section represents the real global world better, I tend to think, because the editors are a Latin American and a European who has worked in the developing world. So we have excellent historical documentation from the Philippines, for example, where Nora Cabral and Gloria Feliciano early helped to define communication for rural development. Also, there are African pioneers like Frank Uboajah, Alfred Opubor, and Joseph Ascroft reminding us that Africans were also early contributors to the field. For the practitioners there are people like Paulo Freire who combines field work with powerful theory as well as people like Andreas Fugelsang, Erkskine Childers, and Colin Fraser who kept the academics honest by reminding them that there is a world of real people out there struggling to solve problems. In short, for those who have an interest and some experience in development work, these readings provide a good historical perspective on a field that has come full circle from post-WWII development initiatives to the new millennium goals.

The contemporary readings are somewhat harder to summarize because it is often difficult to see what is happening in social change except by hindsight. Still, the main sections are broad enough to include much material relevant to communication and social change. These are Popular Culture, Narrative, and Identity; Social Movements and Participation; Power, Media, and the Public Sphere; and Information Society and Communication Rights. The most powerful change that has taken place in the last decade or more, of course, is the growth of the Internet and its applications. Therefore, the digital divide and other aspects of ICT (Information-Communication Technology) application take up a good deal of the latter sections. But there are other topics that are important as well. We hear from Robert Huesca about participation, Karin Wilkins and Arturo Escobar about the power to set the development agenda, and Arvind Singhal about entertainment education, among others who focus on topics other than technology. There is a mix of theory, policy, and practice, but there seem to be fewer practitioners who speak from the application side and more policy makers and academics. This may be due to the previous observation that the changes taking place today have not been sorted out yet, and things seem less clear. One thing is clear, however: the readings suggest that social change and development have entered a new technological phase that,

nevertheless, brings to the fore the same old problems of social inequality, political power in few hands, and people struggling to move ahead. Many of the readings suggest new ways to incorporate the power of people to move themselves ahead. There is no simple answer that anyone has, but the cumulative experience today and from the past six decades, including the sponsor of this volume, suggest that there are ideas out there that others may try in creating positive change.

There is no index to the book, but a detailed table of contents gives the reader a guide to names of authors, titles, and date of publication that help guide readers to topics of interest. At the end of the book there is a list of authors with brief information that may help readers follow up with them.

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