

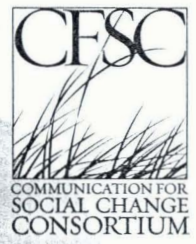
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COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE ANTHOLOGY: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY READINGS

Edited by Alfonso Gumucio-Dagrón and Thomas Tufte

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ANATOMY OF INCOMMUNICATION

Excerpt from: '*Communication and Modernization: The Case of Latin America*'

By Luis Ramiro Beltrán

In spite of all the appreciable progress and meritorious efforts which have been reviewed, many problems still raise huge barriers for communication practitioners with crucial challenges. It is thus unavoidable to pay also attention to their ugly side of the coin.

Some of Latin America's most serious problems of social communication in relation to the needs of national development are the following:

1. A marked lack of awareness, on the part of policy-makers and development strategists, of the significance and functions of communication in modernization.
2. An assignment of very low priority to communication work in government plans, and, thus, an inadequate allotment of funds for it in the national budgets.
3. A virtually complete inarticulation between general development strategies and specific communication strategies for that development.
4. An insufficient availability of government-owned mass media needed to establish and maintain an efficient two-way communication system between the public officers and the broad population, as well as among the different sectors of that population.
5. An exaggerated preference, on the part of government agencies, for one kind of content—institutional publicity, i.e., political propaganda, as well as for one kind of channel, the printed word (which is easiest and perhaps cheapest to use but reaches only a minimum of people).
6. An unduly pronounced concentration, on the part of government agencies, on an unplanned production of messages, at the expense of tasks such as proper distribution, research, evaluation, training, and promotion, which are at least as important as production.
7. A prevalence of deficiencies in physical infrastructure, such as lack of roads, lack of electricity, and lack of modern communication equipment, which makes the existence of a truly national network of social communication extremely difficult.
8. A high level of illiteracy which, coupled with the poverty of the majority of the people and aggravated in some cases by the existence of languages other than Spanish or Portuguese, imposes heavy restrictions on the use of the printed media.
9. An absence of motivation on the part of the mass media institutions—most of which are privately owned—to actually reach the broad masses and, particularly, the rural masses; they remain content with reaching the elite and the upper middle classes in the cities.
10. An insufficient growth of national and regional associations of professional communicators, such as journalists, audio-visual specialists, agricultural editors, and the like.
11. A lack of effective and independent national information agencies and, especially, of such an agency that is Latin American in scope; this permits a virtual monopoly of the international news flow by regional news services [external to the region] that neither inform the region objectively about world events nor report fairly about events in the region.
12. A weakness of the national private advertising firms that allows extra-regional [externally based] advertising consortiums to control much of the internal advertising market of the countries.

The problems that have merely been listed above are, certainly, not exclusively Latin American. They are common to very many of the countries of lesser development, with differences only of intensity.

What is behind those shortcomings? Where do they originate? Are there any basic factors—in addition to intrinsic communication deficiencies—which explain these problems of communication for modernization?

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