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COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE ANTHOLOGY: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY READINGS

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EXCERPT FROM:

COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA: A FORTY-YEAR APPRAISAL

By Luis Ramiro Beltrán

1993 Excerpt 1

Three major conceptualizations of the relationship between social communication and national development have prevailed in Latin America: development communication; development support communication; and alternative communication for democratic development.

Development communication is, in essence, the notion that mass media are capable of creating a public atmosphere favorable to change, which is assumed indispensable for modernizing traditional societies through technological advancement and economic growth. Development support communication is the notion that planned and organized communication—massive or not—is a key instrument for the accomplishment of the practical goals of specific development-seeking institutions and projects.

Alternative communication for democratic development is the notion that, by expanding and balancing people's access to, and participation in, the communication process— at both mass-media and interpersonal grass-roots levels—development should secure, in addition to material gains, social justice, freedom for all and majority rule.

Excerpt 2

NOTES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY AGENDA

What can the initial practitioners of communication for development do? Not very much, perhaps, in terms of actions. They have done the best they could under changing circumstances. However, they can, and must, pass on their experiences (both good and bad) in a systematic and frank manner to those who will inherit

their dreams and occupations in the very near future. They can offer notes for their 21st Century Agenda.

1. Put together the best of development support communication with alternative communication. Do not treat them as islands far apart. Blend social consciousness with a passion for planning. Put together technical abilities and political perceptions.
2. Do much more institution building than self-consuming operations. Teach people to fish; do not just hand out fishes. Persuade key schools of communication to include communication for development in their curricula. Foster in them, and in other institutions, communication research geared toward democratic development.
3. Do not support only government agencies. Put faith in the small communities themselves. Help workers' unions, peasant leagues and neighborhood groups, and work with nongovernmental organizations.
4. Place paramount emphasis on communication for health, sanitation, nutrition and population. People in Latin America must be healthy before they can afford to be well-educated, housed or employed. Plagues such as drugs, AIDS and cholera epidemics demand massive education programs that can be attained only through communication.
5. Insist on persuading political leaders and development planners to use communication rationally to attain the development they promise to the people. Help the masses press them for development.
6. Encourage basic communication training at all levels, including the universities that train health, education, housing, agriculture and development planning professionals. Communication specialists cannot cope with the massive job all by themselves. Help strengthen regional communication institutions. Our countries must expand cooperation. Not even the largest countries can do the whole job in isolation.

Beltrán, Luis Ramiro. "Communication for Development in Latin America: A Forty Years' Appraisal," paper presented during the opening of the 1. Roundtable on Communication and Development, organized by the Instituto para América Latina (IPAL), February 23, 1993. Used with permission of the author.