

Introduction

Communication, Civil Society and Social Change

Comunicación, sociedad civil y cambio social

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Research on Communication, Civil Society and Social Change connects with the evolution and critical revision of Communication for Development, Communication and International Cooperation, Communication for Peace and Communication for Social Change. These areas are based mainly on interdisciplinary contributions from Culture, Gender and Post-Colonial studies, epistemologies of the South and research-action objectives, among others.

This academic context of research and practice necessarily links to the learning and communication scenarios of the various pacific revolutions that have occurred in recent years around the world (the so controversially revisited today Arab Spring, 15-M, Occupy Wall Street...). This also means tackling challenging themes such as the causes and ramifications of what the media call «the refugee crisis», also the flipside of structures and relations that provoke the global threat of terrorism. This profound crisis in international relations and peaceful coexistence influences wide-ranging political and cultural debates in which communication and civil society are determining variables for social change based on the values and criteria of equality and social justice. This dossier analyses the potential and limits of communication (among citizens, in journalism, in digital and educational environments...) in terms of the learning, expression, representation and mobilization of citizens in their processes of agency and empowerment for the transformation of the discourses and structures that legitimize and perpetuate situations of conflict and injustice.

The epistemological, conceptual, methodological contributions, and the input of empirical data and the qualitative review of specific cases in this edition all aim to strengthen the systematization of the criteria of analysis, production and assessment of communication and education for emancipation. This setting of theoretical and practical research into communication for change analyses the experiences, trends and good practices of communication for social change from various traditions. It studies the role of a civil society that is media-active in communication and social transformations, and how academics use them to establish feedback processes. This involves an interjection in the traditional, one-directional media by a proactive digital and non-digital citizenry with access to 2.0 tools with huge political and social potential –but which are also used for pure entertainment or even generating conflict. This edition explores the dialogue between the communication models of structured and unstructured civil society and the strategies underlying the identification and involvement of citizens in specific causes and scenarios that require an open data communication. That is, to go back to the roots and origins of journalism, as different authors are claiming.

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The breadth and complementarity of the communication scenarios and approaches that define this area of knowledge and action have prioritized an international and contemporary focus in its selection criteria; and in the field of communication, the focus is on the dialogue between media consumption and the production of new media. This situation has combined approaches that center on the effects of the media (studies of reception) with others focused on the analysis of discourse and data, and social networks. The articles in this edition range from an analysis of how youngsters interact with traditional media via social networks (the first article looks at films that represent models of resistance) to how these communication scenarios can also play a key role in citizen agency processes, characterizing the social networks as a space for reaction, mobilization, organization and advocacy in general by specific collectives or citizen street protests. From these various communication spaces we can also analyse the role of images in fomenting social change (social photojournalism in particular), as well as community media. These works explore the importance of analysing the education and training of future journalists in the methodologies and principles of open data, and the behaviours of viewers and readers in terms of education, entertainment, the mobilizing power of digital discourses and visual culture, or the various emerging citizen projects.



This monographic dossier presents contributions that seek to answer some of the key questions that were proposed in the call for this monograph: What are the main factors in successful communication for social change? What communication strategies and discourses can transform victimization into agency? How does evolve a movement's visibility into achieving specific social-political objectives? How do 2.0 or 3.0 communication tools contribute to the success of social movements? What type of discourse or strategy can motivate interlocutors to establish stable commitments to social causes or activate a specific reaction on the Net? What impact do digital media have on the political system or on the actions of companies? What competences, tools and dynamics can encourage social change through communication? How can new citizen trends strengthen and support these transformative projects?

Addressing the complexity of some of the hottest themes of social change at the moment, the articles in this edition discuss ideas such as the overhaul of the role of media literacy based on emancipatory and democratic principles in all different contexts of education; the inclusion in university education, and among communication professionals, of the conceptual, procedural and attitudinal competences required to develop information products from open data, and based on models of participation; social activism (in

this case, civil society in Romania protesting against the dangers of fracking), photojournalism's denunciation of the tragedy of migrations and the challenges of the representation of other people's suffering from ethical positions and as a means to mobilization, and the exercise of communicative citizenship in a wide range of community and citizen media projects.

The first article in this dossier, «Looking and Tweeting: Youngsters' Responses to Media Representations of Resistance», by Alba Torrego-González and Alfonso Gutiérrez-Martín, from the University of Valladolid, discusses an empirical study that reveals an interesting dilemma on the potential of Twitter to foment new democratic practices and active citizenship. They analyse the activity and reactions of young people on Twitter as they watch two films, «V for Vendetta» and «Hunger Games», on television. Both have a strong social and political message, yet the tweets generated by the youngsters were playful and entertainment-focussed rather than a critical debate on social resistance, which as the main feature of the two films. This article posits an interesting challenge for media literacy in a civil society undergoing social change to produce an enabling and empowering media education.

«Digital Civic Activism in Romania: Framing anti-Chevron Online Protest Community "Faces"», shows the more political uses of social networks. The article by Dr Camelia Cmeciu and Dr Cristina Coman, of the University of Bucharest, analyses the role of Facebook in the visibility, deliberations and organization of civil society. The results of this quantitative analysis of the self-representations of two Romanian Facebook communities during on-line and off-line protests against Chevron's gas explorations (fracking) in the village of Pungesti in 2013 reveals how with the emergence of groupings and digital communication networks have increased the opportunities for agency and citizen resistance. In little more than a month, this resistance movement went from being a tool for rural mobilization to a national phenomenon, and the authors analyse the communicative strategies (verbal and visual, and the collective action frames) deployed on Facebook that strengthened these processes.

In the intersection of present-day contexts of production and contexts of reception of the scenarios of communication of social justice, «The Transformative Image. The Power of a Photograph for Social Change: The Death of Aylan», by Susana de Andrés-del Campo, Eloísa Nos-Aldás and Agustín García-Matilla, three researchers from various research groups on the #comunicambio network, is an in-depth study of the dialogue between representative and communicative strategies (in particular, iconographic strategies), citizen reception and multiplication via social networks. This article describes the specific role of the image as agent of social transformation, in a study of the impact of the photograph of Aylan Kurdi, the three-year-old boy who drowned while fleeing on a raft of Syrian migrants off Bodrum (Turkey). The study consists of several types of analysis (iconographic, iconological and ethical) that explore an image's capacity to mobilize for social change, particularly within the digital setting. The results show how the value of an image for social change lies not in the magnitude of the tragedy or the fact that it registers, neither in its formal (iconographic) aspects, but on the fact that it can express a change of logic (iconological) and stimulate processes of citizen reappropriation, denouncement and action.

From content and discourse production scenarios, the article «Professional Information Skills and Open Data. Challenges for Citizen Empowerment and Social Change», by María-Carmen Gertrudis-Casado, Manuel Gértrudix-Barrio and Sergio Álvarez-García of the Rey Juan Carlos University, deals with a theme that is very much of this moment, the training and instruction of journalists for social change within the current processes of social transformation resulting from the emergence of the culture of transparency and accountability. Such professional skills are necessary for the development of multimedia interactive news products based on open data that enable the empowerment of citizens, decision-making and democratic action.

The dossier closes with an article by Dr. Mauro Cerbino, Department of International Studies and Communication of FLACSO Ecuador and Dr. Francesca Belotti on one of the main areas of communication for eco-social empowerment, namely citizen media: «Community Media as an Exercise of Communicative Citizenship: Experiences from Argentina and Ecuador». The research, which compares various community-media projects in Argentina and Ecuador, is in the tradition of Latin-American studies on popular communication for social change (in line with other recent contributions from Europe) and shows how popular, alternative and community media are essential spaces for promoting the democratization of communication and the construction of citizen communication. The conclusions point to inte-

resting challenges ahead for transnational networks to promote concerted action within the global order of media communication in order to measure its potential impact on the public agenda.

We hope the quality and contributions of these academic works will be useful for those interested in those areas where Communication, Civil Society and Social Change converge. Last but not least, we want to thank all those people and networks that have made these pages such a reality, primarily to the CSO 2012-34066 project: «Evaluación e indicadores de sensibilidad moral en la comunicación actual de los movimientos sociales» (Ministry of Economy and Competition).