Introduction

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In our rapidly changing global landscape, the realms communication for social change have emerged as critical pillars in the pursuit of a more equitable and sustainable world. This special issue of "Communication & Culture Review" delves into the evolving dynamics of the field shedding light on the multifaceted intersections between communication, development, and societal transformation. As we stand on the precipice of a new era marked by complex challenges and unprecedented opportunities, it is imperative that we examine how communication theories and practices are adapting to navigate this ever- shifting terrain.

The discipline of communication for social change have a rich history, dating back to the mid-20th century when scholars and practitioners began recognizing the importance of communication in driving socio-economic development and fostering positive social change. Over the years, these fields have evolved significantly, responding to changes in technology, media, politics, and culture. Since the beginning of the concern for development of the third world and the role of communication therein, the domain of communication for social change has come a long way in setting itself as a specialised area of study in communication. Conceptualisations of the discipline are generally understood in three different ways (Beltran, 2008), although new perspectives of the field continue to emerge. The first being the idea of development communication where mass media is understood to act as the solution to hurdles of development, while another idea of communication for development (C4D) adopts a mixed approach of utilising different channels of communication for development and social change. On the other hand, the Latin concept of participatory communication envisages participation of communities in communication and decision making process in matters concerning them. The overarching goal of communication for social change is to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge, information, and resources to enhance the quality of life for individuals and communities, particularly among marginalized sections of societies. It further seeks to catalyse transformation in societal norms, values, and behaviours, addressing issues ranging from gender equality and human rights to environmental sustainability and public health. This discipline has a commitment to leveraging communication as a force for positive transformation, but approaches and strategies can vary widely.

An important aspect of this evolving landscape is the profound impact of digital technology. The advent of the internet, social media, and mobile communication has fundamentally altered the way information is produced, distributed, and consumed. As a result,

communication for social change have found new avenues for reaching audiences and mobilizing communities. Social media activism, online advocacy campaigns, and digital storytelling has democratized communication, empowering individuals and grassroots organizations to drive social change in unprecedented ways. Yet, these digital tools also pose ethical and practical challenges, such as issues related to privacy, surveillance, misinformation, and digital divides. Thus it calls for delving into the complex interplay between technology and communication for development and social change. Furthermore, the evolving dynamics of the field are intertwined with the shifting geopolitical landscape. Globalization and migration have brought diverse cultures and perspectives into contact, creating opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and collaboration. However, they have also given rise to cultural tensions and challenges to effective communication across borders. Communication for social change must grapple with these complexities, addressing issues of cultural sensitivity, representation, and inclusivity.

At the heart of communication for social change lie the power dynamics that shape the discourse and impact of communication initiatives. Historically, this field has often been critiqued for top-down, paternalistic approaches that prioritize the voices of dominant elites over those of marginalized communities. However over a period of time there has been a paradigm shift toward more participatory and bottom-up communication strategies that centre the voices and agency of the communities affected by development or social change initiatives. Aroufoune and Durampart in their article highlight how citizens seek to appropriate public spaces in digital media and how their engagements with authoritarianism are fraught with challenges. Rinku Pegu presents the cultural and aesthetic production of Phatobihu, a folklore in India's Northeast and argues that, notwithstanding the documentation and archiving of the festival in print, digital media have not been utilised optimally to capture the material and affective potentials of the festival. She attributes the digital disinterest to institutional apathy. Hazeena in her article explores the role of community media Radio Kothagiri in amplifying linguistic diversity and popularising the indigenous language of the tribal community the radio caters to. Viviane discusses how media development interventions impact women journalists in Burkina Faso. She presents a vignette of intersectional threats, complexity, education, economy and coloniality and gender that leave female journalists exposed to insecurity. On the other hand, she talks about discrimination women journalists face in this region that obstruct them from getting trained. Kulkarni and Hegde narrate how same-sex marriage is a taboo in India and in what ways media and legal discourses could possibly alter the perception towards it.

Through a collection of diverse articles, case studies, and critical analyses, exploring the evolving dynamics, challenges, and opportunities of communication in the pursuit of a better world, the current issue tries to inspire thoughtful and impactful action that brings us closer to achieving our shared vision of a more just and sustainable future.

Issue Editor

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