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New Paradigms in Development Communications

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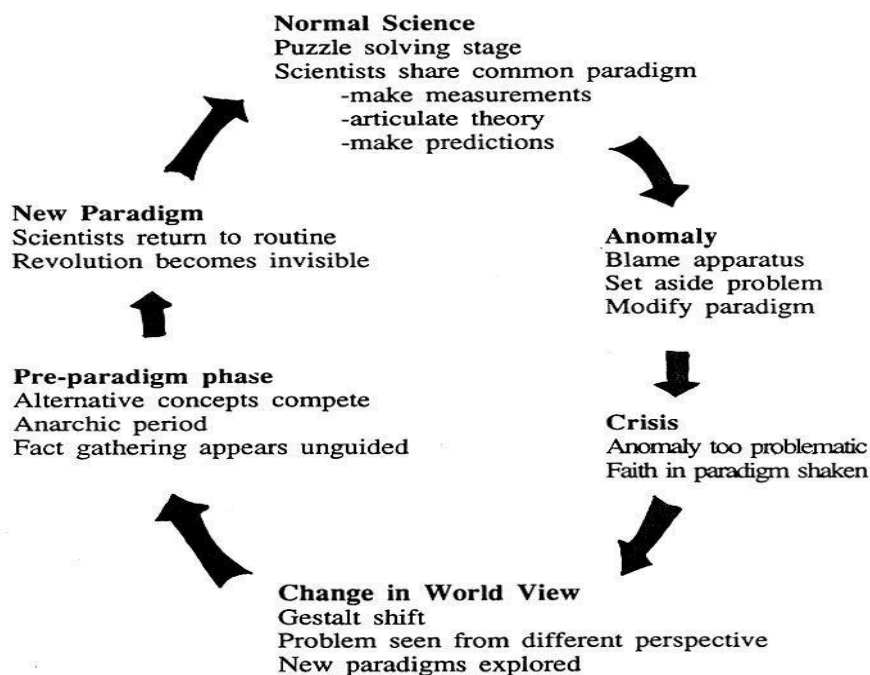
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ABSTRACT: Internet changed most of the paradigms that helped us to describe and understand the public communication ecosystem. The digital age arrives with a set of big communication challenges for traditional mainstream media: new relations with audiences (interactivity), new languages (multimedia) and a new grammar (hypertext). But this media revolution not only changes the communication landscape for the usual players, most importantly, it opens the mass communication system to a wide range of new players. As far as enterprises, institutions, administrations, organizations, groups, families and individuals start their own online presence, they become “media” by their own, they also become “sources” for traditional media, and in many cases, they produce strong “media criticism”: opinion about how issues are covered by legacy media and delivering of alternative coverage. Blogs and social media represent the ultimate challenge for the old communication system because they integrate both: the new features of the digital world and a wide democratization in the access to media with a universal scope. The global process could be understood as a big shift from the classical mass media models to the new media paradigms: the user becomes the axis of communication process, the content is the identity of media, multimedia is the new language, real-time is the only time, hypertext is the grammar, and knowledge is the new name of information.

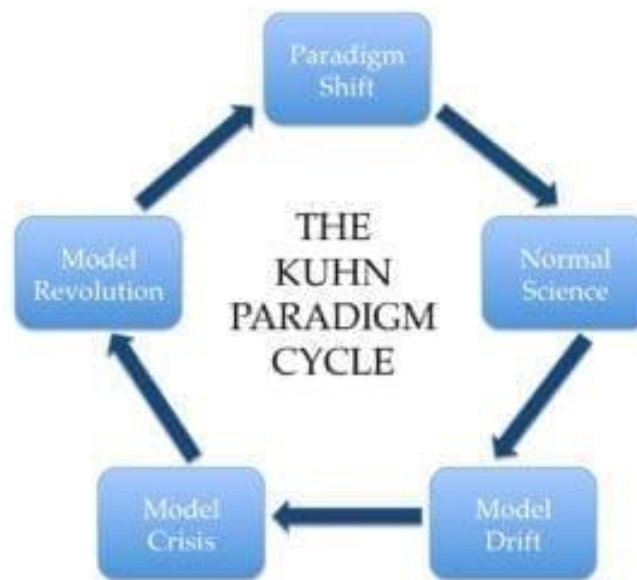
KEYWORDS: paradigms, internet, multimedia, hypertext, communication, criticism, administrations

I. INTRODUCTION

During the 80’s, the merge of satellite and cable technologies enabled broadcast media the delivering of content to thematic segmented target audiences, evolving from broadcasting to narrowcasting. From the 90’s on, internet opens the way to a next step: from narrowcasting to pointcasting[1,2,3].



Online content provision not only could fit niche targets but even more: it could be arranged to meet the specific interests and time constraints of every individual user. The de-massification of public communication arrives with the personal configuration options of online media and services. The passive unidirectional way of media consumption is replaced by the concept of an active user seeking for content, exploring and navigating info-spaces. Users become also content producers in many web environments, mainly the social web. Self-media, nanopublishing or thin media are the new names for the strategy of those users who decide to become even more active and start low profile digital native media activities. The focus shift from the industrial production constraints (press, radio, television) to content authority in order to define media. National Geographic and CNN, for example, are not a particular kind of media, but brands which represents authority over an area of content (natural life) or expertise in current affairs content management (journalism). The media convergence towards digital resets media identity, shifting from platforms to contents and outstanding brand image in relation to a type of content not to a media format. Media brand image is one of the most valuable actives of media companies in the new environment: a source of credibility and prestige for digital content. Today media starts to understand that their business is selling the content, not the holder: multi-platform services to be accessed by users from a range of terminals according to the user's situation and needs. One of the strongest issues about digitalization is that text, audio, video, graphics, photos, and animation could be arranged together and interactively on a single media for this first time in history. This multimedia identity of the actual environment allowed all media industries to converge online (press, broadcast, movies)[4,5,6] and this is the reason why media distinctions related to use of single language (textual, audio, visual) tend to be erased.

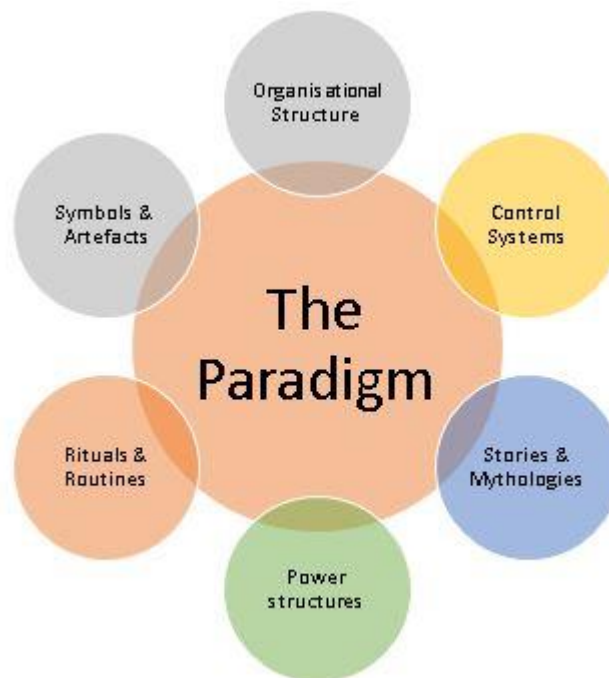


Online media are multimedia, and multimedia is a new language. This meta-medium nature of the net should be understood at the light of older media revolutions: the first step of older media being the content of newer media is followed by a next step in which newer media develops its own language and content, and older media redefine their identities. Regular frequency was a strong paradigm of the old scenario to the point the many media were defined in relation to its time constraints (daily, weekly, monthly). Online media (whether they are digital versions of a daily newspaper, or a weekly or monthly magazine) assume that they must to be real time updated to survive in the new environment. What we lost in the road from periodicity to real-time is the reflection. What we gain is dynamism and conversational styles. Sharing news and opinions with the ability to interact in real-time are the seed of cybercommunities. Space for the print media and time for broadcast media ceased to be the limit to content and now the time of the user is the new scarce resource. One of the strong effects of “readers becoming writers” is the proliferation of online information without clear attribution of source authority and heterogeneity of content quality. The overflow of information calls for new skills and tools to manage data, news, and opinions. Content syndication, news aggregators, news readers, popularity rankings, recommended reading, most viewed lists, trending topics, are but just a few of the tools available to navigate the chaos of abundance. The gatekeeper paradigm was broadly used to explain the role of media editors and the agenda-setting theory and to describe the functions of media in defining the daily issues. This intermediation function should be revisited nowadays in the light of the decentralized nature of the net.[7,8,9] Together

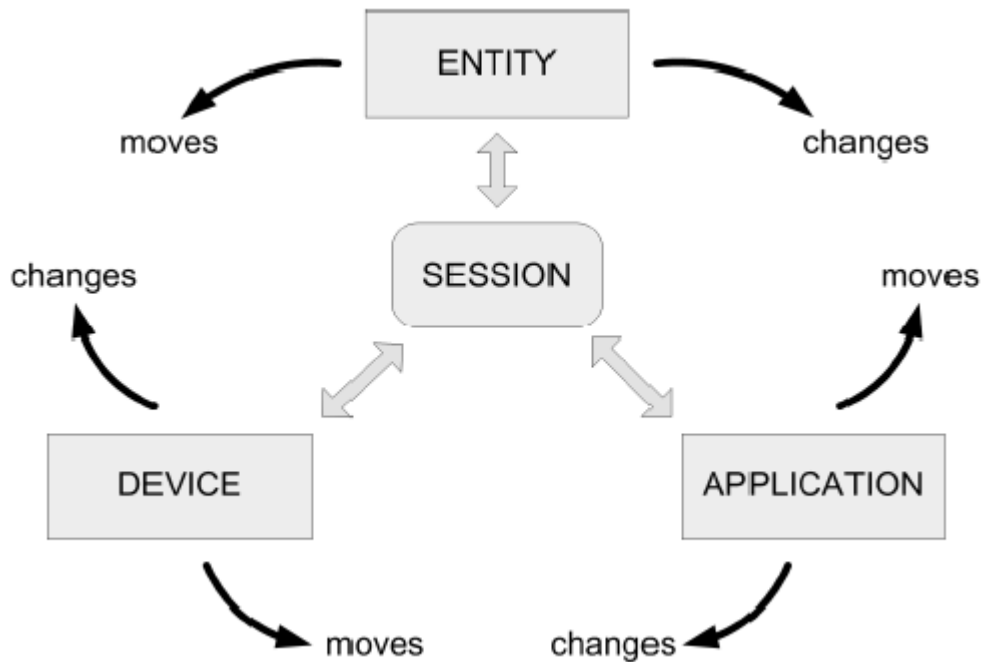
with legacy media, many other informal sources become relevant to establish the agendas (because the agenda does not exist anymore). Worldwide publishing without editors, but with a close peer review daily process and in most cases open to comments from readers is the nature of social web publishing. As a result of that, the agenda of relevant current affairs goes beyond the established media land and now is share with a wide variety of new sources, most of them not media, including social web portals, mailing lists, e-bulletins, search engines, newsgroups, forum and weblogs with their respective feeds when available.

II. DISCUSSION

The broadcasting paradigm of one to many unilateral distribution is replaced by both: many to one access and many to many communication. Client-server architecture of the internet started a new model based on the decisions of the users.



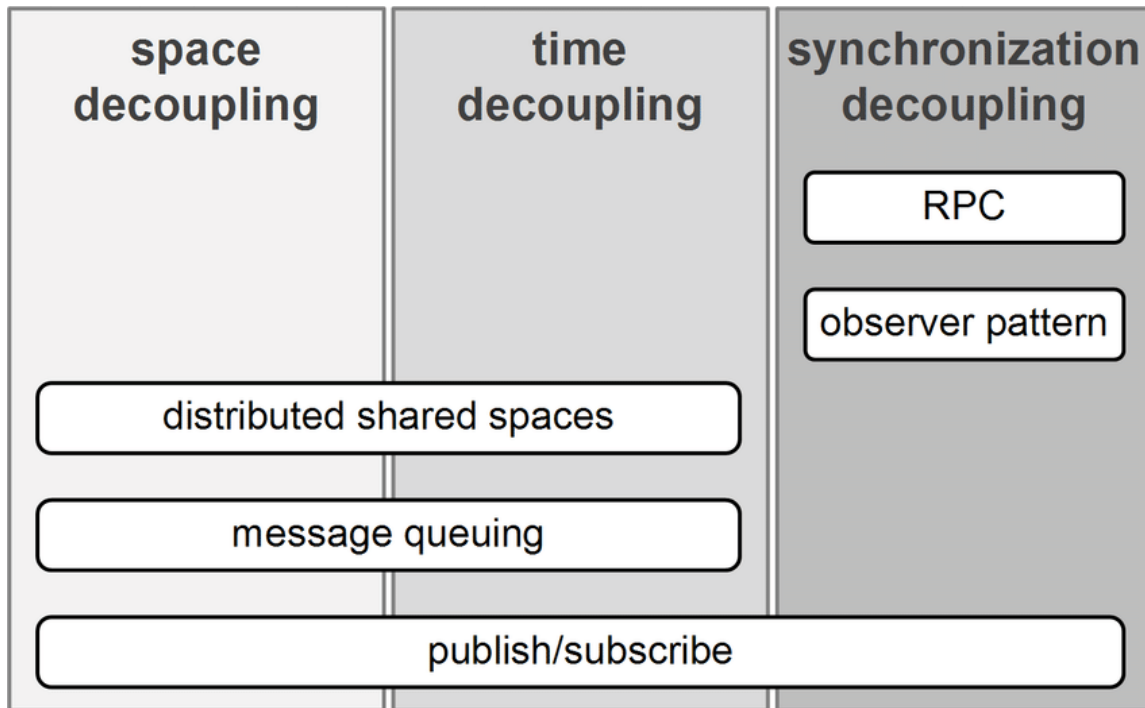
The access paradigm is complementary with the user center paradigm and both explain the strong interactive nature of the new environment. Access means to seek, search, navigate, surf, decide, an active attitude, a will to connect and communicate, the contrary of the passive reception of media content. “My daily visits”, “My homepage”, “My favourites”, walls and timelines are expressions of this personal way to seek for content, and the lasts attempts of contextual advertising shows how the old dynamics has change: now advertisers are looking for targets outside the media arena, testing ways for a personal approach based on keywords searching and database mining. Far from the single-direction point-multipoint asymmetrical distribution model of legacy media, with the net emerges a bilateral inverse model many-to-one based on the client-server architecture of the internet, but also a multilateral horizontal and symmetrical many-to-many model. The fact that content providers and users access the same channel to communicate, enable the users to establish a bilateral relationship with media and also a multilateral relationship with other users of the system.



Secondly, by the same rule, users could become content providers. In the new environment, the user has the ability to choose between content options and to define the time for access, but interactivity also means the capacity to change the aspect of the content, to produce content for a system and to communicate with other users.[10,11,12]The first level of interactivity has to do with the possibility for the user to choose the format of information display (browser and navigation interface configuration). The second level of interactivity is the possibility for the user to produce input for a system. This contribution could be co-authoring, writing comments, answering pools and tests, posting news, and so on.The third level of interactivity has to do with the possibility for the user to communicate with other users of the system in real or delay time.Dealing with interactivity in the context of media with a long and strong tradition of one-way distribution of content is one of the most important challenges that mainstream media has to face.Analogue media narrative construction is linear and narrators have the power to control the story organization and tempo. The digital platforms enable narrators to organize content by fragmenting it into small units (nodes) with multiples paths between them (links). Hypertextual narratives empower the user shifting the control of the narrative from the narrator to the reader.From linear temporal media, we are shifting to non-linear spatial content. Hypertext becomes the grammar of the digital world. Reading text lines, listening or watching temporal (linear) audiovisual media are typical activities of traditional media consumption. The digital nature of the actual environment opens the way for a spatial, rather than temporal, organization of content. Websites, blogs and social media profiles are spaces to visit. Virtual spaces where users perform activities: they meet each other, learn, gather and share news and opinions, do shopping and gaming, entertain and create.The pathways of the info-spaces are built on links. Creating and activating links online could be the new name of alphabetization. Reading and writing by linking, this is, exploring and creating hypertextual environments on a daily basis is the most strategic skill digital natives are achieving.[13,14,15]

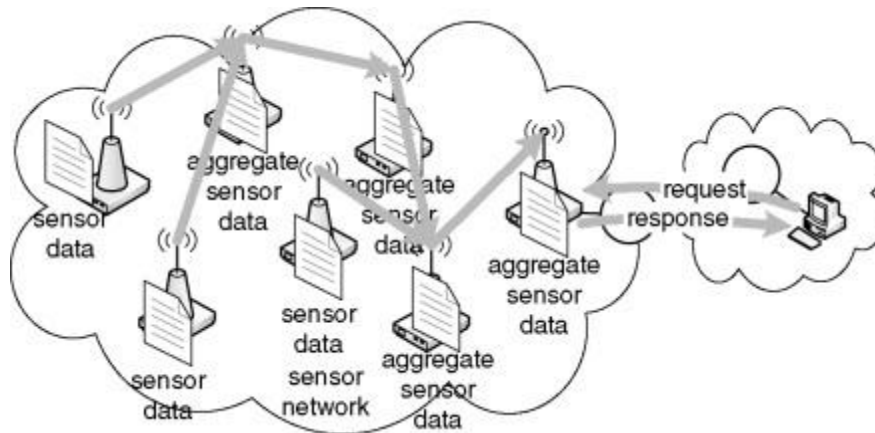
III. RESULTS

The extraordinary amount of data available in the Digital Age bring back the strategic role of media as social managers of knowledge, a role to be shared with an increasing number of new players.The analysis of data and its transformation into knowledge (not the management of a platform) becomes the axis of media activities.

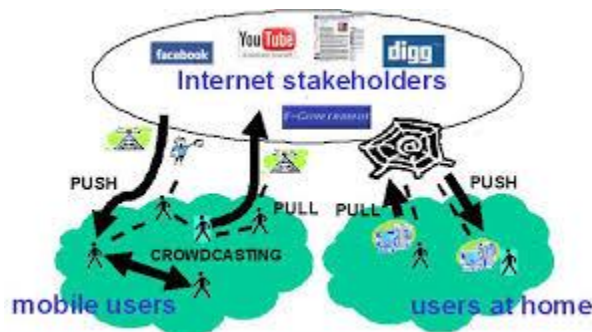


Comparison of communication paradigms

Today, the strategic mission of media is the information about the information: information intelligence, interpretation, filtering and searching combined with the challenge of new interactive multimedia narratives and delivered by a wide range of channels. This new scenario for public communication in the internet era should not be understood in an apocalyptic way, but it should be considered, instead, as the opportunity to redefine the profiles, the professional challenges and the academic training of communicators, and also to rethink the changing nature of media and mediators. When the United States became a superpower after World War II, American social scientists were called upon to study the problems of “Third World”[1] development. This started the modernization school, which dominated the field of development in the 1950s and Rogers rightly called “dominant paradigm”[2] of development as it exercised a dominant influence in the field of development. This model emphasizes productivity, economic growth, industrialization, urbanization, centralized planning and endogenous factors of development, and development was measured by gross national product (GNP). Daniel Lerner and Wilbur Schramm are among the influential advocates who made significant contributions in identifying the role of communication for technological development. Heavily influenced by the evolutionary theory, American social scientists conceptualized modernization as a phased, irreversible, progressive, lengthy process that moves in the direction of the American model. Strongly influenced by Parson’s functionalist theory, they looked upon modernity as incompatible with tradition. Subsequently the American social scientists proposed that Third World countries should copy American values, rely on US loans and aid, and transform their traditional institutions.[16,17,18]



However, the failure of modernization programs in Latin America in the 1960s led to the emergence of a neo-Marxist dependency school which led its researchers modified their basic assumptions. These recent modifications of the modernization school have started a new direction of research referred as the “new modernization studies” or “dependency school”. This dependency school was highly critical of modernization school, frequently attacking it as a rationalization of imperialism. The dependency school conceptualized the linkages with Western and Third World countries as a set of externally imposed, exploitative, dependent, economic relationship incompatible with development. Thus this school advocated that Third World countries should sever their linkages with western countries in order to promote an autonomous, independent path of development. This is because that the latest theme of modernization school is that tradition can play a beneficial role in development and Third World countries can pursue their own paths of development.[3] However, when the dependency school came under attack in the early 1970s, its researchers modified their basic assumptions as follows: “dependency is not just an economic but also a sociopolitical process; dependency is not just an external relationship but also a historically specific internal relationship; and development can occur side by side with dependency.” [4] Thus a new direction of dependency started as the “new dependency studies”. Although the dependency school was unable to destroy the modernization school, the modernization school was unable to exclude competing views as illegitimate. The coexistence of contrasting perspectives in the field of development made the 1970s a time of intellectual fertility. By the mid 1970s, the ideological battle between the modernization school and the dependency school began to subside. The debate on Third World development became less ideological and emotional. A group of radical researchers led by Immanuel Wallerstein found that there were many new activities in the capitalist world-economy that could not be explained within the confines of the dependency perspective.[5]



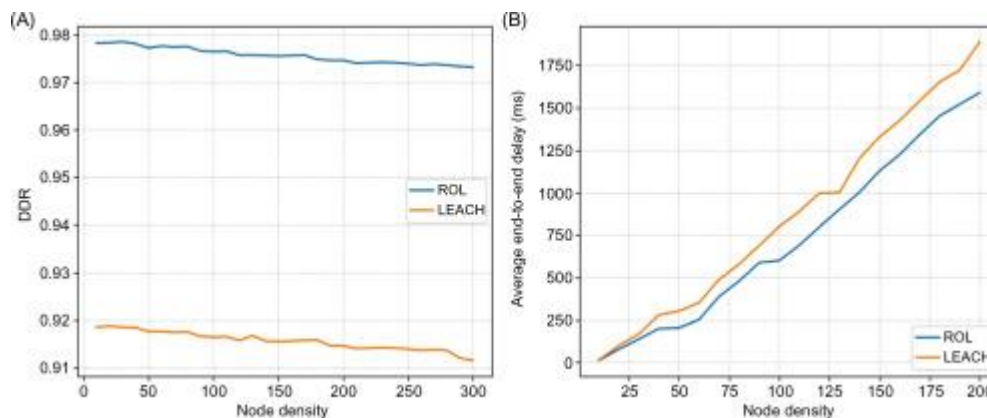
The world-system perspective, thus emerged, and offered a new orientation to the interpretation of major events in the 1970s, such as East Asian industrialization, the crisis of the socialist states, and the decline of the capitalist world-economy. Influenced first by the dependency school and then by the French Annales school, world-system researchers emphasized the need to examine the totality. The unit of analysis thus should be the world-economy, a historical system composed of three strata: “the core, the semiperiphery, and the periphery”. [6] The world-system school contended that by the late twentieth century, the capitalist world economy would reach a transitional stage at which real choices might be made to change the path of human history.[7]

The main realization that development was not going well in developing countries for those who have followed the dominant paradigm closely has made people think that there were alternative pathways to development. In the late 1960s and 1970s, several world events combined with intellectual critiques began to crack the credibility of the dominant paradigm and the reigning paradigms of modernization and development no longer inspire the confidence which they did three decades back. Critical assessment of results and fresh endogenous reflection, have led to serious doubts and questions, which in their turn have thrown up insights and have led towards the emergence of an alternative paradigm as we have in the following:[8]

Economic growth can no longer be defined merely as raising the GNP and per capita income. Both are necessary, but without a purposive orientation they can defeat the objectives of development. A major share of benefits of growth is invariably cornered by the thin upper crust of society, leaving the masses where they were or worse off. The development paths so far followed by most Third World countries have proved blind alleys. The focus has to be on people and society. It implies more equitable distribution of goods and services.[19,20,21]

The development endeavours of the last three decades have been largely emulative and, therefore, in many instances misdirected. A small elite often with western orientation has taken major decisions in respect of the present and the future; people themselves having little say in them. Many Third World countries are under authoritarian and repressive regimes, some have only a façade of democracy; where democracy still survives in the political sense, the choice of the people is restricted to one or the other elite-led political party whose orientations differ only in minor detail. To ensure endogenous growth a new institutional framework, assigning more decisive roles to the people and their associations, is necessary.

The development process, almost globally, has shown a lack of sensitivity to the environment. This has had lethal effects. History bears testimony to the fact that some civilizations have died because of their reckless exploitation of the environment. An important element that is missing from most planning development is sustainability. Most development countries are consciously or unconsciously trying to copy the West without any awareness of their resources and limits.[22,23,24]

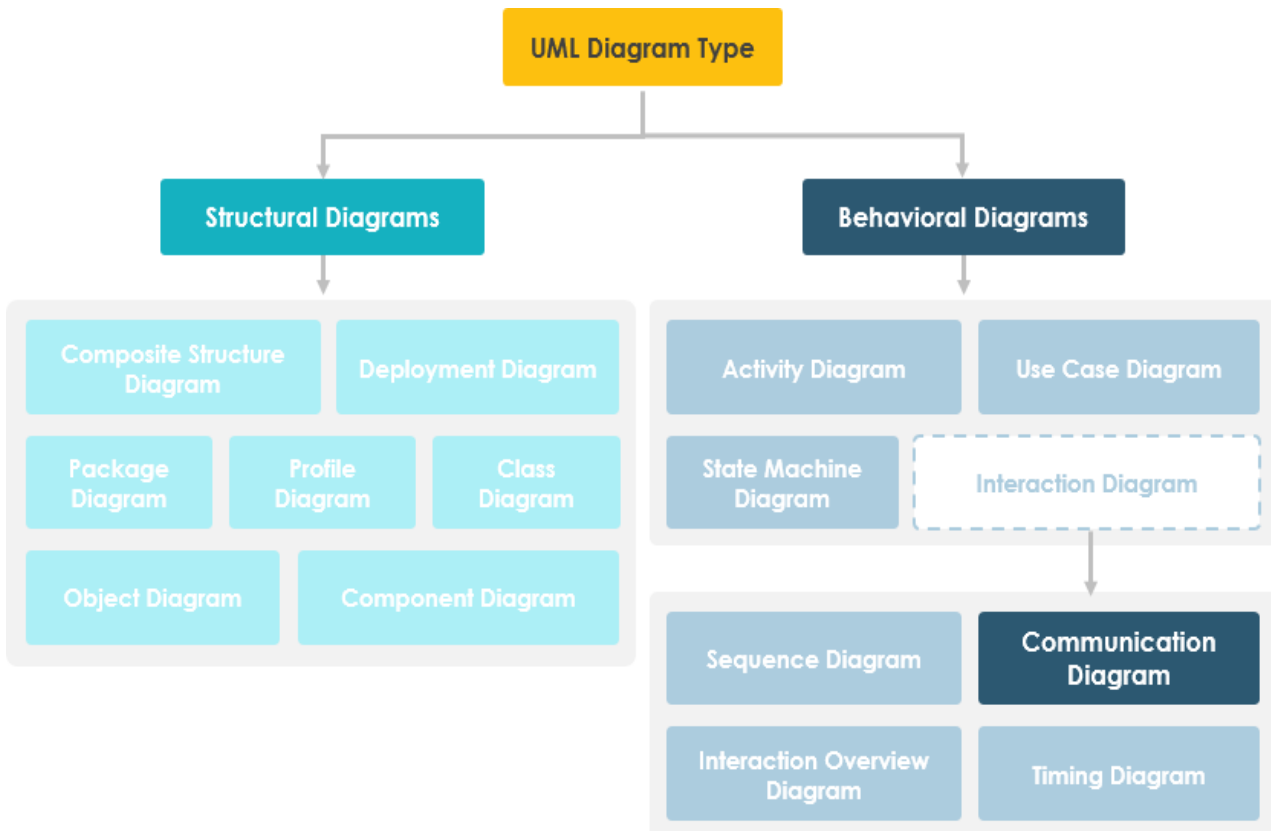


While relative self-reliance is the ideal, global interdependence cannot be ignored. The developed countries have depended, and still depend, on the developing countries for many important resources that have made their development possible and contribute to its continuation. This interdependence is not restricted only to raw and semi-processed materials; the West has drawn heavily also on the brain power and trained competence of the Third World.

Rogers also identified four world events which many took as reason to accept an alternative to the dominant paradigm of development.[9] Those with sympathy for ecological issues were disgusted with the environmental pollution in the developed nations. This led to the question whether they were, after all, such ideal models for development. Pollution problems and overpopulation problems on available resources helped create doubts whether unending growth was possible or desirable, whether high technology was the most appropriate engine for development. There was a growing loss of faith in the “trickle-down” theory of distributive development benefits. People were getting “development weary” from the slow rate of economic development. The world oil crisis demonstrated that developing could make their own rules in the international game and produced some suddenly rich developing nations. This was a lesson to other

developing countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa – that the causes of underdevelopment were not mainly internal. The sudden opening of international relations with China allowed the rest of the world to learn details of her pathways to development. China had created “miracle of modernization” in two decades without any foreign assistance.

Thus development programmes based on the Dominant Paradigm were not achieving the anticipated results, leading to revisions. However, each of the three revisions discussed above focused on a single dimension of the development – the causes of underdevelopment. They did not address the question of how an effective development programme could be implemented. The dominant paradigm in the 1950s and the new paradigm in 1970s were the only two paradigms which emphasized the problem of implementation as well as analyzing the causes of underdevelopment. [25,26] From all these events grew the realization that there were many alternative pathways to development while their exact combination would be somewhat different in every nation. Every nation may pursue somewhat different pathways to development depending on exactly what style of development was desired. Thus another new paradigm of development emerged as a reaction of all development models in the past and it tries to assimilate the various emphases of all the other models. Development theorists labeled it as the “new paradigm of development” or “alternative paradigm” because for the first time, development theorist and practitioners have incorporated many dimensions in the development model which were never emphasized before.[10]

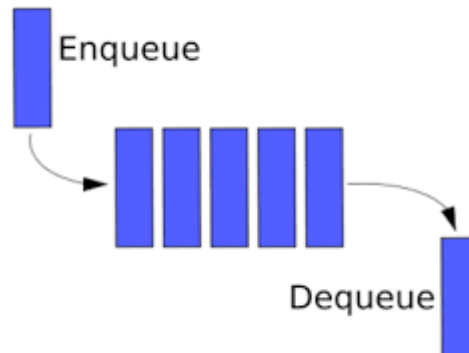


Alternative development suggests a course of development that is need-oriented, endogenous, self-reliant, ecologically sound and based on structural transformation. It is aimed at meeting human needs, endogenously defined and with primary focus on those who have been deprived and exploited. It recognizes the importance of equality, freedom of expression, conviviality and creativity. Each society is left free to operate according to its values and cultures and articulate its own vision of the future. No universal model is to be imposed; each society can build its own.[11] For development a society has to rely essentially on its inherent strength, although collective self-reliance is not ruled out. Rational utilization of the biosphere is built into the model: outer limits have to be respected and local ecosystems handled sensitivity. From the little community to the global human community structural transformations will be needed to evolve participative decision-making mechanisms. Capacity for self-governance will have to be strengthened.[12] Thus the concept of development that answers the questions of development for what, development by whom, development for whom, and development how contains the following five elements:[13]

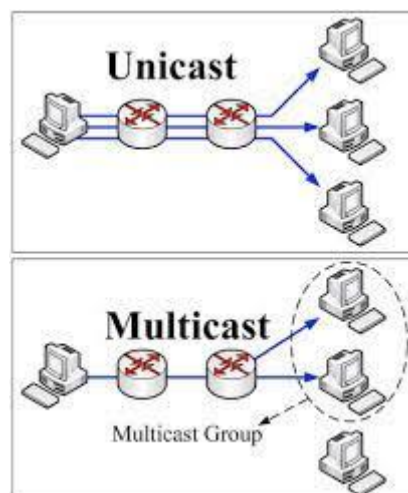


Communication paradigms for a distributed system

Need-Oriented: that is, geared to human needs, both material and non-material, starting with the needs of the majority of the world's inhabitants, the dominated and the exploited. Ensuring the humanization of all human beings by the satisfaction of their needs for expression, creativity, equality and conviviality, and to understand and master their own destiny. Endogenous: that is, stemming from the heart of each society, which defines in sovereignty its values and its vision of the future. Self-reliant: that is, implying that each society relies primarily on its own strength and resources in terms of its members' energies and its natural and cultural environment. Ecologically sound: that is, utilizing rationally the resources of the biosphere in full awareness of the potential of local ecosystems as well as global and local outer limits imposed on present and future generations. Based on structural transformation: they are required, more often than not, in social relations, in economic activities and in their spatial distribution, as well as in the power structure, so as to realize the conditions of self-management and participation in decision making by all those affected by it. Rogers initially identified with the Dominant Paradigm approach and laid out clearly its central concerns and preoccupations. He argued that there is a shift in the focus of development in the new and alternative paradigm. The result of this paradigm is an alternative concept of communication in development. Some of the theories under way in newer conceptions of development communications are: self-development, self-reliance, the communication effects gap, the new communication technology, and understanding the participatory approach of the new paradigm.[14] Self-development: This approach suggests concern for involvement of individuals in their economic and social life. Rogers identified self-development in this context as some type of small group at the local level that takes the primary responsibility (i) for deciding what type of development is most needed in their village or neighbourhood; (ii) for planning how to achieve this development goal; (iii) for obtaining whatever government or nongovernment resources may be necessary; and (iv) for carrying out their own development activities. This was different from the earlier top-down approach to development which defined development in terms of what government does to and for the people.[15] Self-reliance: Self reliance is independence in development with an emphasis on the potential of the local resources. Rogers argued that self reliance suggested rejection of external models of development leading to a viewpoint that every nation and perhaps each village may develop in its own way. Dissanayke pointed out self-reliance in this model is seen as a way of eliminating or minimizing the exogenous political pressures and trade patterns that are associated with exploitation of developing countries by the developed countries.[16]



Communication effects gap: The communication effects gap concept has suggested that there is not only a gap in the socio-economic benefits of development but there is a knowledge and information gap between the “have” and the “have nots”. This could seriously affect the direction of development.[17]New Communication technology and development: The potential of new communication technology such as satellites, broadcasting, cable television and computers for facilitating the process of development in Third World countries is limited. But what is new about the technology is not the technology per se as the social technology of how the new communication devices are organized and used, and how the audience is organized to receive and discuss the messages. In this paradigm Rogers has changed his stance with regard to the diffusion model. Rogers argued that for development both diffusion of technological and social innovations were necessary. He advocated that it was communication that was more important in innovation the innovation itself. Secondly, the acceptance or rejection of communication not only depended on what was being communicated but on how it was being communicated.[18]Participatory Communication Model: Participatory communication is a product of the criticism of vertical or top-down communication system. [15,16,17]Essential to all development programmes is the development of human beings and the assumption that planning and implementation of development programmes should be carried out with the people and not for them. Therefore there is a need to see participatory communication both as “means” and as an “end”. Ryan and Kaplun pointed out that such a perspective of communication could be a means towards a new model of development based on man’s complete freedom from all forms of marginality and exploitation.[19] Paulo Freire was a vigorous exponent of this participatory model for liberation. As a result of their critique of western education systems in Central and Latin America, Freire and Illich proposed education and communication system based on participative and receiver-oriented.[20]Deveoplment communication is regarded as a key to people’s participation in the development process. People must be regarded as the subjects as well as the motive force of development. It is so easy to get away with the fancy world of new technologies- or colorful traditional media.



We have to pause for a moment to realize that communication is not about the production of information material, but lies in its ability to reach people with useful information conveyed via a humane perspective, exchange of views, expressions of concern about basic need issues and communicating sustainable solutions. Above all, the objective of development planners and communication specialists is to mobilize people for action and empower people to resolve

their own problems.[21] We should therefore identify our service as participatory communication, in recognition of the people we serve as being equal partners. The main objective here is to empower people to speak for themselves and to narrow down the communication gap between regions, nations, communities and social groups. For example: In Bangladesh, the Nutrition Blindness Prevention Programme (NBPP) almost eradicated a disease which turned blind 30,000 children a year – night blindness due to Vitamin A deficiency. NBPP initiated in 1984, relies on a network of 400 women volunteers who cooperate with local schools and teachers, mothers’ clubs and, last but not least, children who relay nutritional information between school and homes both, as beneficiaries and as communicators. In close cooperation with the volunteers and teachers, radio dramas, posters, traditional theater plays, cinema spots and films for mobile units were produced to pursue two major goals: to inform about nutritional blindness and how it can easily be avoided, and to reinforce local action through problem and goal-oriented regional mass media support.[22] Ethics which is defined as ‘the branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to rightness or wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions’ attempted to analyze the issue in development, noting the moral underpinnings of human actions in the theory and policy-making realms.[23] In defining and discussion of development it must be included the physical, mental, social, cultural, and spiritual development of individual in an atmosphere free from coercion or dependency. Besides, importance would need to be given to preserving and sustaining local traditional cultures and other artifacts as these are usually the media through which people at the grassroots structure their reality of world around them.[24] The level of development is usually laid at the level of the nation-state or some region. Here development of individuals or group is neglected. Development should not create greater misery for a large body of humanity at the periphery. We have been experiencing the coexistence of development and poverty. In case of individuals, development and poverty do not have to coexist, but the notions are not individuals. The notion is that when nations develop they can get rid of poverty. This is not true. On the other hand, it is in the nature of the development process to cause greater poverty. Second, it is the method of development that causes poverty.[25] Fewer and fewer individuals are consuming more and more. Any policy that continues to exploit the masses at the cost of the rich and powerful is morally indefensible. What is needed in future is a more egalitarian distribution of benefits and risks of development across all social and economic classes. Policy-makers, on the basis of their own actions, should refrain from increasing human misery.[18,19,20] The focus needs to be on humane development, i.e. to reduce human suffering and not increase it. The Human Development Report (1992) accuses the rich and elite states for contributing, to a great extent, to the persistent and widening disparity among the states and to the failure of world markets to benefit the poorer and less powerful states. The Report points out: “Firstly, where world trade is completely free and open...it generally works to benefit the strongest. Poor and developing countries enter the market as unequal partners – and leave with an equal rewards. Secondly, in...those areas where developing countries may have a competitive edge...the market rules are often changed to prevent free and open competition.”[26]

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Every achievement has its own advantages and disadvantages. Thus Alternative Paradigm of development also not free from certain limitations in spite of its many ideal approaches of development. The following are some of a few reflections from both sides. The new or alternative paradigm does not contain a single model for participation. In terms of theory and research, the game consists of discovering what forms of participation occur in particular contexts and relating those forms to existing social, economic, and political conditions. Thus flexibility makes the paradigm suitable to all contexts.[21,22] This new paradigm of communication development is audience-oriented and participatory that stressed development for individuals of periphery. Sustainable development that is eco-friendly development. Even though most policy makers or development planners would accept this principle, sadly enough, this has remained a theoretical benediction rather than an active practice.[23,24,25] It is in a way disheartening to see that only small efforts are yet being made in communication for sustainable development around the globe. This participatory approach of communication also left us critical questions unanswered. [26]

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