

Interview



10.1590/1809-58442025101en



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Dialogue of knowledges, Buen Vivir and participatory communication: social change in the post-pandemic era

Diálogo de saberes, Buen Vivir e comunicação participativa: pensando a mudança social na era pós-pandêmica

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Editorial Details

Double-Blind System

Article History:

Received: 12/17/2023

Accepted: 12/20/2024

Available Online: 04/03/2025

Article ID: 2025101

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Funding:

CNPq

How to Cite:

Rossini, V.M.; Foletto, L. R.; Marão, M.; Medeiros, R. F. (2025). Dialogue of knowledges, Buen Vivir and participatory communication: social change in the post-pandemic era (interview). INTERCOM, Brazilian Journal of Communication Sciences, 48, e2025101. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1809-58442025101pt>

Contact Author:

Veneza Rossini (venezar@gmail.com)

Interview conducted by:



Veneza Mayora Ronsini



Laura Roratto Foletto



Marco Marão



Rafael Ferreira Medeiros

Federal University of Santa Maria; Postgraduate Program in Communication at Santa Maria, RS - Brazil



Thomas Tufte

Loughborough University London, Institute For Media and Creative Industries, Londres, Reino Unido

The interview with Professor Thomas Tufte was conducted by members of the Research Group "Social Uses of Media" during the researcher's mission in the Graduate Program in Communication at UFSM, funded by the CAPES/PrInt Internationalization Program – Call 41/2017.

Thomas Tufte is the Associate Dean of Research & Innovation at Loughborough University London, where he also serves as a full professor. As one of the world's leading scholars in the field of Communication for Social Change, his work is internationally recognized. Trained as a cultural sociologist, Professor Tufte has extensive experience in research and practice related to Communication and Social Change. He also holds a position as a Senior Research Associate at the University of Johannesburg, in South Africa. Additionally, he is a member of the Academia Europaea.

Tufte's academic expertise focuses on critically examining the interrelations between media texts, flows, and genres; communicative practices; and processes of civic engagement and social change. In recent years, his research has centered on civic engagement, particularly in the context of social movements. He has explored the role of communication in everyday life and its relationship with social change and democratic development. One of his key intellectual influences is Paulo Freire, whom he met personally on several occasions in the 1980s while working with social movements and democratic development in Latin America. Together with Professor Ana Suzina, Tufte has spearheaded a series of activities and publications dedicated to the global legacy of Paulo Freire in communication, civil society development, and social change.

Tufte's extensive publication record includes 18 books and over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters. He has also co-edited seven special issues of international peer-reviewed journals, including *Journal of Communication*, *Journal of Media & Journalism*, *Journal of African Media Studies*, *International Communication Gazette*, *Matrizes*, *MedieKultur*, and *Commons*. Fluent in English, Portuguese, Spanish, and Danish, his work has been widely published in these languages, as well as in Italian and Greek.

Tufte began his career with six years of experience in international development cooperation. He first worked at UNESCO in Paris, followed by a position at DanChurchAid, a major Danish NGO. Later, he joined the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in Asunción, Paraguay. This hands-on experience in international development has significantly shaped his academic career, fostering long-standing collaborations with both development practitioners and scholars in the Global South. Over the years, he has collaborated with organizations in over 30 countries, including the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, USAID, Danida, SIDA, International Media Support, The Panos Institute, ADRA, Soul City Institute for Social Justice, and Femina Health Information Project, among others.

Professor Tufte completed his PhD in 1995, with a dissertation on telenovelas, culture, and modernity in Brazil, adopting an ethnographic approach. Since then, he has maintained a strong interest in the strategic power of narratives and how audiences interpret their mediated environment in relation to social change. Having lived for four years in South Africa, East Africa, and Latin America, he has developed long-standing academic relationships across these regions. These connections continue to inform a central aspect of his work: fostering collective research processes and knowledge exchange, building bridges across different epistemic communities. In this capacity, he has led several international research projects and networks involving scholars and institutions from multiple countries. In 2016, Tufte moved to the United Kingdom to assume a position as Professor and Director of Research at the School of Media and Sociology at the University of Leicester. Two years later, in August 2018, he became Director of the Institute for Media and Creative Industries at Loughborough University London. Currently, Professor Tufte is working on a book project that explores issues of communication, activism, and well-being in the post-pandemic era. This project examines communicative principles and practices, knowledge production, and epistemologies among engaged citizens, activists, and social movements. Additionally, he is actively collaborating with and advising two international research projects in Mexico and Brazil. In the latter case, he has established a partnership with the Usos Sociais da Mídia Research Group, coordinated by Professor Veneza Ronsini. This collaboration has led to a mutual learning exchange, which resulted in the present interview, generously granted by Professor Tufte during his visit to the Federal University of Santa Maria. His visit included workshops and public keynote lectures.

In this interview, conducted by the Usos Sociais da Mídia Research Group, Thomas Tufte explores the concept of *Buen Vivir*, which originates from Andean indigenous cultures. He highlights its complexity and varying interpretations in Latin America and Europe, emphasizing the importance of knowledge dialogue and the creation of trust-based spaces to promote communication for social change. He also underscores the critical role of communities in this process.

Tufte further discusses the need to strengthen community media as a means to combat media inequalities. He critically examines the role of mainstream media, highlighting its opportunistic relationship with market forces and the importance of regulatory policies to ensure a more equitable media landscape. He acknowledges the potential of digital platforms to amplify voices but warns against the hegemonic commercial logic of large corporations, stressing the need for digital literacy and appropriate regulation.

From a post-pandemic perspective, Tufte identifies new opportunities for change, particularly through the engagement of social movements. At the same time, he points to the climate crisis as a pressing new challenge. Regarding participatory communication, he argues that it is more than just a tool – it is an objective in itself. He directly links it to Paulo Freire’s pedagogy, reinforcing its importance in communication for social change.

Finally, Tufte suggests that discussions on development and social change should begin by addressing the kind of society we want to build. He emphasizes the need for pluralism and flexibility in approaching communication and social change, advocating for a more inclusive and diverse understanding of these processes.

Revista Intercom – How do you understand the concept of Buen Vivir? According to Salón (2014), it is still a concept under construction, but how can we understand it in practice, considering both European and Latin American contexts? Would it be a utopia in the face of the capitalist framework in which we find ourselves?

Thomas Tufte – Okay, well, thanks for the question and for this opportunity to talk and discuss some of the issues we’ve also been discussing over the past few days here in Santa Maria. I think a lot of what we are going to talk about is also linked to the seminar and the keynote I delivered here this week. And of course, I think the question around Buen Vivir – or, you know, good living, as some translate it – is interesting because it’s a difficult concept to even translate into English. Some translate it as “well-being,” and in Europe, there’s a lot of discussion around the concept of well-being. But I think, as a concept, Buen Vivir has a history that traces back to the Andean region, and it is very closely linked to issues concerning indigenous groups in the Andes. And I think we saw, in the 1990s, some ways of looking at Buen Vivir – or good living, as we might call it in English – being operationalized in places like Bolivia and Ecuador by their governments. Which I think had a lot to do, first of all, with reacting to a very specific development discourse – one that was very much linked to a modernization paradigm, to a neoliberal economic project for society. But also, it wasn’t just a critique of that; it was also a reaction from people, groups, and cultures who did not feel represented, who were not being heard, or who did not have any space in this development project. I am thinking primarily of indigenous groups, but you can expand that category to include others as well. So, I think one way of looking at Buen Vivir is as a very open concept, and I believe it should remain an open concept. It’s always difficult – if you start making very precise definitions, you risk excluding future groups from future discussions. I think Buen Vivir is about openness to different forms of knowledge. Another key issue is balance with nature, because a lot of what happened in the 1990s – especially following the UN Rio Summit in 1992 – aligned well with Buen Vivir. If I remember correctly, some governments, especially Bolivia, which was a pioneer in this, had a Ministry of Sustainable Development that brought together different ministerial areas to approach development from a much more complex perspective. So, apart from valuing other knowledge systems and promoting balance with nature, another fundamental issue in Buen Vivir is quality of life. And I think you might see that concept more in the European discussion on well-being than you would see it here in Latin America, where issues of identity, unsustainable relationships with nature, exclusion, and lack of diversity are much more prominent. So, I think there are variations in how Buen Vivir is understood, depending on whether it is approached from a Latin American or a European perspective. One last point I would like to mention, which was also discussed in class, is that if you look at other perceptions of development – for example, the Bhutanese notion of happiness, which uses the Gross National Happiness Index as a way to assess development – you will see that its key criteria are very similar to Buen Vivir, except that it focuses on happiness. If you analyze the indicators they use to operationalize it, to put it into practice, you will find many similarities. Finally, one thing I haven’t mentioned yet is that fundamentally, there is a question of justice here. It’s about economic and social justice, cognitive justice, justice for nature. It’s about justice and rights, and all of this is part of the ongoing debate on Buen Vivir. So, when you ask whether it is the formulation of a utopia, I suppose you could say so. But I think it’s also about finding ways to practice it and to operationalize it. Maybe Bolivia and Ecuador could serve as examples. It’s still a work in progress, and I think it will continue to be. While Buen Vivir might have emerged – and continues to emerge – as a demand, as a right, from civil society, from bottom-up movements, I think it is also something that governments really need to pay attention to.

Revista Intercom – The idea of well-being in Europe – do you think it has to do with the economic crisis, mental health issues, and also the contact with other cultures? Could these factors influence this concern with well-being?

Thomas Tufte – I like the last part of your question – whether the European discussion is linked to contact with other cultures. Hopefully, and possibly, from the bottom up, other cultures are articulating different life experiences – you know, immigrant and refugee groups. If that’s what you mean by other cultures, then yes, those groups in Europe might be articulating different perspectives in this field. But I think the discussion of well-being in Europe is, above all, tied to hyper-globalization – to the acceleration of the neoliberal capitalist system. This acceleration... we can barely keep up with it anymore. You know, massive loss of biodiversity in countries like the

UK – huge losses in just a few decades. Or take the digitalization of work life, which keeps people working all the time. So, I think a big part of it is this acceleration – of life, of work life in particular. And that is what leads to many of these mental health issues. You know, record levels of stress – unprecedented numbers in mental health indicators. I think all these elements are far more dominant. And they point to a system that, frankly, is not very social. The economic system upon which we build our society doesn't really have any social indicators, to be quite honest. And maybe that's what we're reacting to. And it's from that reaction that I see some of these demands and articulations around well-being and quality of life emerging.

Revista Intercom – Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) considers the need for a horizontal dialogue between different forms of knowledge when discussing communication for social change. How can this dialogue be carried out, considering the multiplicity of communication processes which, in your words, establish a common sense upon which to build social transformation?

Thomas Tufte – Yeah, I think this dialogue of knowledges – or let's say, this exchange of knowledges – is very much at the heart of this whole idea of horizontal dialogue. I think I shared in class a small story about when I met Paulo Freire for the first time. It was in May 1987, in the eastern zone of São Paulo. We met at a Catholic Mass, actually, and then we asked to interview him. This was during the time when the first urban land occupations were beginning, the early days of the urban MST. That movement was happening at the time, and I was discussing it with him. He talked about something that I believe he also wrote about – the need to be “impatiently patient.” That was one key element, but he also spoke a lot about the need to create spaces – discursive spaces. And I think that when we seek a place for these horizontal dialogues between knowledges, it is very much about space creation. It's about having discursive spaces where we can speak freely and trust each other. And, you know, in times of fake news, we are facing a crisis of trust in some of our online communication. So how do we create spaces that are not only discursive but also spaces of trust – where these articulations and dialogues can actually happen? I think these dialogues can happen online, like the one we're having right now. But I just want to emphasize this element of space creation as a way to secure a horizontal dialogue. And the technologies we have today can help us build and expand those spaces. So, this common sense that emerges from dialogue can help us formulate our demands and pursue them.

Revista Intercom – In what ways do notions of community and aspects of community relations intersect or collaborate in communication for social change?

Thomas Tufte – Well, I suppose community is exactly an answer to this idea of space creation. You know, when we talk about communities, we typically think of relatively small communities – our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our schools, the places where we receive education, the communities we live in in our everyday lives. These are spaces of personal relationships, of trusted relationships, of possible dialogues. But then, of course, it's also about expanding these spaces and connecting them – that, I think, is what we need to do. So, community does play a key role in horizontal dialogue and in the exchange of knowledge. I think one of the things we talked about yesterday in class, in the seminar, was the need to avoid romanticizing the local – or, we might say, not romanticizing the community itself. Because communities are also full of tensions, power struggles, and conflicts. But on the other hand, they are spaces where we know who we are dealing with – you know, we can see each other, we know each other. So, I think it's also very much about building communities of trust, and that's what we need to foster. A good starting point, of course, is our neighborhoods – the spaces where we live and navigate in our daily lives. These spaces are increasingly becoming digitally mediated spaces, and of course, that brings some changes. But I believe that community, as a concept, continues and will continue to play a key role in this horizontal space creation and dialogue creation.

Revista Intercom – In a text that you published with Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron (Dagron; Tufte, 2006), you argued that the outcomes of the communication process for social change go beyond individual behavior, also considering the influence of social norms, values, policies, and culture. How does this process unfold in practice? Could you provide an example? And what would you consider to be the starting point for a communication process aimed at social change?

Thomas Tufte – I think the question about what the starting point is really interesting. Yesterday – again, I keep referring to these last three days of seminars discussing with master's students, PhD students, and colleagues here in Santa Maria – when I asked them to bring examples from civil society on how participatory communication happens, they all came up with these very organic, bottom-up experiences. And that, you know, challenged my routine way of thinking about where the starting point is. Coming from a donor country, like the UK or Denmark – my home country – we tend to think in a more top-down way when we design projects. We think about funding, support, the logistics of implementing a given initiative. But what I heard yesterday is that the starting point for any

communication for social change process has to be in the formulation of demands based on lived experiences. So, from that perspective, I think one way to support such processes within communication for social change initiatives is by carefully building relationships with these bottom-up initiatives – community-based organizations, small NGOs, large NGOs, social movements, maybe even startups or certain types of businesses. I think it's about curating and establishing relationships. And then, if we are talking about developing a communication for social change initiative, it also involves co-creating and co-formulating the objectives – what do we want to achieve? And then thinking about strategy – how do we use communication to reach those goals? And it's not necessarily all about participatory communication. Sometimes it's also about spreading messages on specific topics. But I really liked what came out of yesterday's discussion – that the starting point is in building relationships and connections, whether it's through technical support, financial resources, or other forms of collaboration. Many of the examples I heard yesterday were about constructing bottom-up initiatives and movements. I would like to add one more thing. What I didn't hear much about in yesterday's discussion on participatory communication was strategic thinking. I think there also has to be an element of strategy. To go back to Paulo Freire and the idea of creating a discursive space – how do we negotiate power? How do we claim a space of power? How do we do that strategically? Often, in bottom-up initiatives and movements, there is a lot of frustration, a lot of demands for rights. But sometimes, we also need to think strategically about how to challenge hierarchies and existing structures—how to approach power holders, decision-makers. How do we do that? I think some element of strategic thinking and planning is really important.

Revista Intercom – You argue that communication for social change should strategically use the media to address and, at times, challenge the structural conditions that shape social change processes—such as the power dynamics in society that contribute to and exacerbate social injustice. How can this be achieved in the context of the Brazilian media system, which has long been controlled by an elite that effectively uses it to serve its own interests? How can communicative inequalities and issues of media representation be minimized? Do you see community communication as a possible solution?

Thomas Tufte – I would say my analysis is a little less black-and-white when it comes to understanding mainstream media. Because, you know, I remember once doing an analysis of Rede Globo back in 1985. We know that mainstream media are opportunistic—they go where the market is, where the audience is. And back in 1985, the democracy movement was gaining momentum in Brazil. What was initially “Tancredo Já” became “Democracia Já”, and the media simply jumped on that popular sentiment. So, all of a sudden, they were strongly in favor of democracy – not necessarily because of deep-rooted principles, but because they were adapting to the prevailing public mood. In other words, mainstream media operate based on a commercial logic, shaped by market dynamics, which makes them, as I said before, opportunistic. Now, how do we work with them in a way that promotes communicative equality and fair representation? I think legislation plays an important role here. I know that Brazil has a very strong commercial and privately owned media sector, but you also have some interesting public broadcasting initiatives, even if they are relatively small. Legislation is a way to ensure that public service broadcasting has a place – it's another mechanism for creating spaces. Of course, it's not just about passing laws; you also need to implement them effectively. And I think that during the last government, this was severely restricted – resources for public broadcasting and film production, for example, were significantly reduced. But I also believe that media legislation can be used to regulate private media. Of course, this has to be done within reason – ensuring that some content restrictions respect fundamental freedoms, especially freedom of expression. However, legislation can still be an important tool in creating spaces for more balanced media representation. And regarding your third question about community media: to the best of my knowledge, there are still many community radio stations in Brazil. I remember seeing Cicilia Peruzzo's research – maybe about a decade ago – indicating that there were around 10,000 community radio stations. That might not be the case anymore; I'm not up to date with the latest numbers in Brazil. But I do believe that they play a key role. Their modus operandi is shifting – from traditional analog formats to more digital platforms, which presents new opportunities. But going back to what I said earlier about the crucial role of communities, this is very much linked to community radios as well. They provide a space for representation – a platform for voices that otherwise struggle to access either public or private media.

Revista Intercom – How do you analyze the use of digital communication platforms, such as social networks and podcasts, by marginalized or subaltern groups? Do you believe these platforms offer real opportunities to amplify their voices, or do you think they merely reinforce hegemonic commercial structures, given that they are services controlled by large corporations?

Thomas Tufte – Another small anecdote comes to mind – this one from Myanmar. They gained access to the internet quite late, and until very recently, when people accessed the internet on their phones, their applications would go directly to Facebook. As a result, they misunderstood the internet as being Facebook. For the people of Myanmar, Facebook was the internet. And I think this speaks to what you're asking about – the hegemony of some of these big corporations and how they use technology in ways that primarily serve their own interests. That being said, I also think that over the past ten years, we've seen how these digital platforms can create new opportunities. If we

look back at the Arab Spring a decade ago, there was an initial wave of fascination with how these new technologies were enabling people to connect, to speak out, to have their voices heard. Movements across the world were being documented and live-streamed. But then, we also saw how authoritarian governments reacted. When they wanted to crack down on a movement, they simply shut down the internet. The internet played a crucial role in Egypt and in many other places around the world. I believe this was also the case in Brazil around 2013-14, although, of course, with some complexities. But to answer your question – I do believe that digital platforms provide opportunities to amplify voices. Even today, we have a clear example with Iran – the struggle of Iranian women for their rights. If it weren't for the internet, we wouldn't truly know what is happening in Iran right now. So, I think this is an example of how, despite the dominance of commercial hegemonic structures and corporate interests, these platforms still offer the possibility of amplification, documentation, and visibility. And we shouldn't forget that these platforms are just technologies – behind them are people, policies, and practices. I believe we also need to work with the people, the policies, and the practices that shape these technologies. As citizens, we need digital literacy, critical perspectives – we need to know how to respond to fake news and how to deal with algorithms that continuously direct us toward certain types of content. How do we respond to that? As citizens? As individuals? As decision-makers? The truth is that decision-makers – politicians, for example – are at least five, maybe even ten years behind the technological capabilities of big corporations. So, legislation is lagging far behind. We are now seeing some efforts to regulate these platforms, such as new legislation coming from the European Union—but even that is arriving ten years too late. So yes, I do believe there are opportunities, but I also think we need to work with those who use these technologies, those who design them, and those who regulate them.

Revista Intercom – In an outstanding conference held in 2021 on communication for social change in a post-pandemic world, you stated that the impact of Covid-19 has made the deep hierarchies of global power and the injustices in resource distribution more visible. You also highlighted the urgent need to rethink not only our policies and practices but also our ontologies and epistemologies. In your view, is it already possible to assess the direction we are heading in this post-pandemic scenario, particularly in countries with high levels of social inequality, such as Brazil?

Thomas Tufte – That's a difficult question to answer because we are still in the process of emerging from the pandemic. It makes me reflect on the role of crises. And I think that here in Brazil, the country has gone through a double crisis – a crisis of government and a crisis of the pandemic at the same time. So, in a way, there has been a double impact on society. And this is exactly the kind of country you're referring to – one with high levels of inequality. But I think this also brings me to a broader point about the role of crises. Yes, I do believe that crises open up new perspectives. When a crisis hits a society, a rupture occurs, and some of the underlying dynamics that regulate or shape that society become more visible. Suddenly, you can see who makes decisions about vaccine distribution, who holds power at different levels – both globally and locally. But at the same time, you also see opportunities. You see alternative paths. You witness acts of solidarity. You see new voices emerging. So, I think crises also present moments of opportunity to shape new directions. Unfortunately, we've seen in the past that crises often expose the harsh realities of the world – inequalities, deep divisions – and the new ideas or visions that emerge during these moments often struggle to sustain themselves over time. That being said, I have been really happy to be back in Brazil. This was the last country I visited before the pandemic – I left in March 2020 when it all began – and now I'm here again for the first time. And what I am seeing is a revival of civil society – people believing that alternative worlds are possible and articulating these ideas through media, in public spaces, and wherever they have access. I also see a rearticulation of certain public policies. In the interviews I've conducted with members of civil society, I've noticed how important it is for them to refer to laws – mostly laws that were established some time ago – as well as their relations with the state, ministries, public institutions, municipalities, and other levels of governance. These relationships, which existed before, are now being rearticulated, renewed, and reestablished. So yes, I think this is a moment of opportunity – one that needs to be nurtured, developed, and sustained. Because what often happens, unfortunately, is that in the end, those with power manage to prevail over those with less power. I believe we are at a truly strategic moment – one in which we must continue to develop spaces, particularly for civil society, and strengthen relationships. I haven't fully addressed the question on epistemologies, but I do believe this is also about articulating different epistemologies, different ways of knowing – leveraging the opportunities that have emerged in the wake of this earthquake of a crisis that the world has experienced.

Revista Intercom – How do you analyze the role of social movements in communication for social change? Considering both the Brazilian and global contexts, which key actors can be identified as relevant in this process?

Thomas Tufte – If you look at this historically, I think any process of change has come from below – it has come from social movements. Looking back through history, many rights have been achieved through some

form of resistance, mobilization, and deliberation. These processes are typically bottom-up. At the same time, and I've said this many times before, there is a contradiction in the very notion of communicating for social change – because social change is not something that happens strategically, nor is it something you can simply communicate for. It is, by nature, a bottom-up process. So, I think there is no question that social movements are fundamental in articulating change. And again, I might be repeating myself a little, but I believe that what happened with the Arab Spring was largely a reaction to the global financial crisis. The movements we saw around 2011, 2012, and 2013 were, at a broader level, responses to the financial collapse of 2008. From a meta-perspective, that's how we can view it today. Now, we are dealing with another crisis – the crisis of the pandemic. During the pandemic, we saw some forms of mobilization, but they were difficult to articulate. Now, we are facing a different kind of crisis. So, figuring out how to mobilize, how to move forward as a society, and how to take new directions is becoming more complex to identify and discuss. But if we consider not just the pandemic, but also populism – particularly the way Brazilian society has experienced it under the previous government – we can add yet another layer of crisis: the climate crisis. And with that, we are also witnessing a great deal of activism and mobilization happening across the world today. Perhaps, in the context of these overlapping crises, we can return to the concept of Buen Vivir as a kind of meta-movement – a movement of ideas that envisions the possibility of alternative worlds. A movement that recognizes diversity – not only in terms of broader societal visions but also in everyday practices. And, of course, we can look at this in more specific and topical ways. But to put it simply, the answer to your question is yes – social movements are fundamental in articulating change. And therefore, they are also essential in communication for social change. It's about engaging with them, supporting them, and strategizing with what is already in motion. As I mentioned in response to a previous question, it's about tapping into existing movements and co-creating strategies around them. I hope that answers your question – it's a difficult one!

Revista Intercom – How do the concepts of participatory communication and communication for social change interact? Considering Paulo Freire's studies on participatory communication, could it be seen as a tool for communication for social change?

Thomas Tufte – I think that would be underestimating participatory communication – it's more than just a tool. It's more than a means to an end; it is an end in itself. It is an objective in its own right. And I think, once again, this connects to the different terminologies we use when talking about communication for social change. Personally, I have increasingly started to talk about communication and social change because I want to avoid the implication that communication necessarily leads to social change. But I am somewhat ambivalent about this because I do believe that, in the best of all worlds, communication – when understood as a liberating and emancipatory practice – can serve as a powerful force. And in that sense, it is deeply influenced by Paulo Freire's ideas. Some of the concepts he developed – his ontological call, which I mentioned the other day in my inaugural lecture – are fundamental. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, back in 1968, Freire speaks about principles such as respect, humility, dialogue, and love as essential foundations of his pedagogy. And it is his pedagogy that informs participatory communication, which, in turn, underpins the relationship between communication and social change. So, I would say they are very much two sides of the same approach to communication.

Revista Intercom – In the introduction to the book *Communicating for Change*, which you co-edited with Jo Tacchi, you discuss the variation in the terminology used for development and social change, as well as the anamorphism of these terms—that is, the fact that they are not standardized and do not follow a uniform structure. You suggest that this may indicate ontological and epistemological differences, which, in turn, permeate work related to communication and development. How do you understand the relationship between development and social change? Does one necessarily precede the other? Are they similar concepts? Some argue that development implies a broader transformation – do you agree? More broadly, how should we understand the concepts of communication, development, and social change.

Thomas Tufte – You're asking difficult questions, you know? I think when we talk about development, we need to be careful not to take an overly instrumental approach in any of our analyses. I remember when Alfonso (Gumucio-Dagron) and I were editing that large *Communication for Social Change* anthology – we discussed this extensively. Alfonso was always very clear in saying, Communication is not the same as Information. Information is not Communication. He strongly argued that communication is a process – a social process between people. And I believe that development and social change should also be seen in this way. I have always defended the concept of development, despite its historical association with modernization paradigms and its deep entrenchment in neoliberal models of society and economy. I have argued that development can still serve as a useful heuristic concept – something that helps us think critically about these models. But perhaps now, I am beginning to let go of it. I believe the term has too many limitations, and maybe it's time we set it aside, let it rest – perhaps even allow it to

fade away. Fundamentally, before we even start talking about communication, we need to talk about society. Social transformation is about discussing what kind of society we want. And of course, communication is about discussing how we get there. Returning to the idea of Buen Vivir, but adding another layer—this brings me to the concept of the pluriverse. Much of the post-World War II thinking, especially within the modernization project, was built on the notion that one world was possible – that there was one single formula that could be applied to everything. But now, this universalist perspective is being challenged by discussions on pluriversality. So, when we think about what kind of society we want, I believe we need to ask: what kinds of societies do we want? – in the plural. Because we are different. Of course, I think we all desire stability, peace, and equality. We all want a good life, but perhaps in different ways. So, we need to respect diversity. We need to respect different worldviews. I believe that discussing what kind of society we want inherently involves this recognition. And this is where communication comes in – how do we get there? Some of the ideas around communicative justice that Eliana Herrera-Huerfano and her colleagues articulated in their book are deeply connected to these issues (Herrera-Huerfano et al., 2023). And perhaps we can expand on this further. Right now, we are discussing how we might broaden some of these concepts even more. I believe that situating communication within these contexts – connecting it to epistemic ecologies and dialogues of knowledge – and then starting to discuss strategies... This is where communication plays a role. And this is why I find myself increasingly drawn to the notion of the pluriverse – it holds the necessary diversity and flexibility that we need to discuss communication and social change.

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- Conflicts of Interest: The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interests that represent a conflict of interest regarding the manuscript.
- Author Contributions: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Project Administration; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Writing – Original Draft; Writing – Review & Editing.
- Image: authors

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