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HOW CAN COMMUNICATIONS CONTRIBUTE TO SELFDETERMINATION OF

RURAL WOMEN IN THE THIRD WORLD?

A Research Paper presented by

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HOW CAN COMMUNICATIONS
CONTRIBUTE TO
SELFDETERMINATION OF
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. General background

The major proposition of my research paper is the need of
selfdetermination by rural women in the Third World.
The rationale is that:

1. <u>women</u> are the most marginalized, due to limited access to and
   control over resources and women's subordinated position in
   society at large.
   The analyses of the general problem of women's status arised
   from the basic premise, brought to the fore by women, that they
   contribute to development in various ways, but they do not
   always benefit from development equally or automatically with
   men. The U.N. Decade has given this an international focus
   and has led to specific policy approaches for women.
2. Selfdetermination of rural women in the Third World, in the
   sense that women can do something themselves to solve their
   problems, is based on the idea that <u>many forms of communication</u>
   do not include conscientisation in the communication processes.
   Often communications are imposed upon the women and do not
   include a creation of selfdetermination among women.
3. There is generally a <u>lack of real communication</u>, in the sense
   of interaction between the one with "influence" and the target
   group, in this case the rural women in the Third World.

My research question is: How can communications contribute
to selfdetermination of rural women in the Third World.
Hardly any information is available about the lives of rural
women in the Third World. Generally they are portrayed,
especially in the mass media, as passive victims and not as
producers. The Western norms and values are dominating the
structure of international communication. This has consequences
for the process of development and often even hampers endogenous
cultural development. Through the introduction of communications
in development women tend to loose the ways in which they have
always coped with their own environment. These development
programmes are often based on models of economic growth and
modernization, as proposed by the North. A question that arises

is, in whose interest are the communications in development.
On the one hand women may have directly benefitted from
information made available to them (e.g. growth in literacy
rate, better health conditions) and on the other hand not
many structural changes have occurred. The power is still
in the hands of a minority, who controls the role of
communications in development. Women can hardly participate
in the production of messages, constructed for them. Women
have less access to information than men. If information
does reach them, it is generally along the sexual division
of labour as perceived by men.
In summary, rural women in the Third World get information
through a variety of different forms of communication. This
has implications for their selfdetermination.

1.2. Methodology

The research method which I have used is primarily secondary
analysis of source materials about communications.
Although a large percentage of the world's population,
particularly rural women, is not reached at all by mass
media, there is a growth in world communication facilities.
My main focus is on mass media and communication through
social and political institutions and less references are
made to interpersonal forms of communication, due to the
fact that within the literature on communications, more
research is reported about these forms of communication.
Within feminist literature I have not come across research
about the relationship between communications and selfdetermination
of rural women in the Third World. Little research has been
done about women and communications and even less about rural
women in the Third World and communications. Also within
meanstream literature about participatory agricultural
extension in the Third World, few references are made to
women, though they are important agricultural producers
in the Third World.
I have used mainly critical studies on mass communication
and on communications in development, because these are

the most useful within the framework of my research paper.
Within these critical debates, gender so far has generally
been ignored. This does not mean that these theories are
irrelevant for feminists, however I see a connection with
women's oppression and other inequities in society. The
value of these theories for feminism can be if within these
critical studies the scholars incorporate feminism into
their arguments. I will try to relate my secondary analysis
of source materials as much as possible to rural women in
the Third World.

My experience of working with rural women in North-Yemen
and my rural background have influenced this research paper,
although no specific references are made to these experiences.
Furthermore discussions with experts in communication,
specially C. Hamelink from the I.S.S., have helped to shape
this paper. Last but not least, I feel a strong commitment
to rural women in the Third World which I think is a
prerequisite to work with them.

1.3. Organisation of the paper

In the next chapter theories will be elaborated which are
of importance in the framework of my research paper. The
relationship between rural women in the Third World and
communications will be examined in chapter three. After
this I shall give a tentative answer to my research question:
how communications can contribute to selfdetermination
of rural women in the Third World. Based on this answer,
conclusions and recommendations shall be given in the
last chapter.

Chapter 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In the framework of this research paper I would like to
elaborate four main concepts: communication, mass communication,
extension and conscientisation. In this chapter I shall examine
how these different concepts relate to conscientisation. In
the process of selfdetermination, in the sense that people can
do something to help themselves, conscientisation plays an
important role.

With respect to mass communication, theories will be examined
which give some possible answers to the relationship between
mass communication and society. Two basic considerations are
made: mass communication influencing society and society
influencing media. I see these theories as important, because
it shows a basic understanding of different approaches about
what the media are doing.

All the theories and concepts mentioned in this chapter are
important to elaborate before examing specifically the
relationship between rural women in the Third World and
communication.

2.1. Communication

Communication can be defined as social interaction by means
of symbols. It is a process and the aim of communication is
to transmit messages.

In the communication process five main elements can be
distinghuished: source, message, channel, receiver and effect.
This is the SMCRE-model of Berlo (1962) as described in the
literature about communication.

In the communication process there needs to be a source ànd
a receiver. The source can be anything, but does not always
lead to communication. If there is no receiver it is not
possible to talk about transmitting information.

Information is transmitted in the form of signals and symbols.
Signals are the soundwaves produced by ourselves or the
electrical waves made by the radio. These are the carriers of

information, the channels through which messages are
transmitted. Signals can become symbols, this means that
on the base of a social system signals get meanings.
Information says something about the reality in which
people live. Words have cultural connotations and reflect
many ideas of the social environment in which people live
(1). This is called semantic information and of importance
if one talks in another language or with people from a
totally different social environment.
In the communication process selections are made: not
everything does lead to communication. There is a whole
series of variables which determine the selection, such
as social, economical and psychological circumstances.

In order to send the intended message to one or more other
persons, the sender encodes the message. The sender makes
a choice of the codes and the channel, which can be human
(including body language) or material (telephone, T.V.).
The message will go to the receiver, who decodes the message,
tries to understand and interprete the message.
The effect of the communication process functions as a source
too. The message can be completely differently received by
the recipient compared to what the sender intended to say.
This can be so because of many reasons. Irrelevant information
can disturb the communication process. Another reason may be
selective perception of the message by the receiver. The
choice of the channel plays an important role in the communication
process too and there can be "defects" in the channel. The
meanings of the codes and interpretations of the messages
are also relevant. If the receiver distrusts the sender,
this will have implications for the interpretation of the
message. Expectations need to be taken into account.

In summary there are many variables which determine the
effect of communication. Figure 1 (2), shows a picture
of diadic interpersonal communication, in which the communication
process is illustrated. The above mentioned elements are
coming back in this picture.

Illustration 1 : Diadic Interpersonal Communication
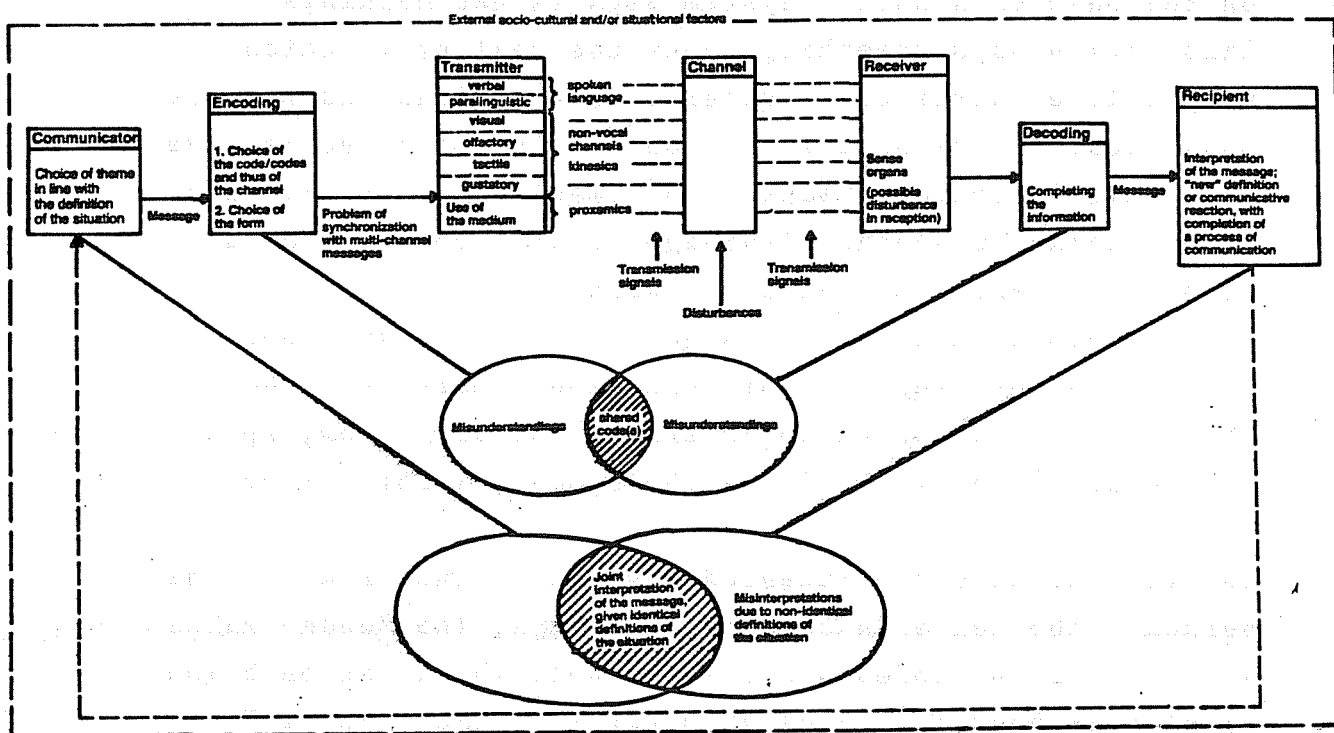
This illustration can be used to analyse communication
processes, e.g. in extension, by using this model an evaluation
can be made about what went wrong or well by sending the
message to the people.

2.2. Mass Communication

Mass communication is one form of communication. Communication
processes can take place in direct ways or indirect ways.
Indirect means that communicator and receiver are physical and
social seperated in time and space and there is a medium in
between. The processes can be public and personal and these
can be informal and institutionalized. If we deal with mass
communication the main characteristics of this form of
communication are that it is public and indirect. There is
rarely a possibility of reciprocity between the communicator
and the recipient and it is institutionalized by means of
technology.

There are many definitions of mass communication. I shall
elaborate here only one definition of mass communication
which is used in communication science (3): " to send
messages, in which the sender conforms to everybody, at
least does not make exceptions for the forthcoming
receivers, in which he spreads the messages as such that
no single other body can be excluded from being receiver,
in which a channel is used to which everybody can be
connected, in so far this depends on the sender" [my own
translation] .

I would like to make two footnotes regarding this definition.
1. It suggests that everybody can have access to information,
   because mass communication does not make exceptions for the
   forthcoming receivers. Throughout history we know that
   people all over the world do not have equal access to
   resources. This also applies to information.
2. In practice there are many forms of mass communication,
   from aiming at everybody to some receivers only. When we
   talk about mass communication, we are inclined to think
   about mass media such as newspapers, television and radio.
   Research has been carried out about this kind of media,
   while there are many other and new forms of (mass)
   communications like satelites and telecommunication which
   have impact on the lives of the people all over the world.

2.3. The Relationship between Media and Society

In the framework of this research paper I would like to
emphasize the question of the relationship between mass
communication and social change. The concern of the
relationship between mass communication and society comes
from the idea that mass media reflect and create social
reality. In this section I shall elaborate how mass
communication is influencing society and the other way
around.

There are many possible answers and some theories which
give different versions of this relationship. Those theories
can not be applied universally, given the different historical
circumstances. Sometimes the differences between the various
theories are very small. Here an attempt will be made to
explain some main theoretical approaches.
For this purpose I use the model proposed by Rosengren
and described by D. McQuail (4). Rosengren has supplied
labels as in Figure 2, and these serve as a classification
of the main theoretical approaches. For the purpose to
examine the relationship between media and society two
basic propositions in the cross-tabulation are made:
"social structure influences culture" and "culture
influences social structure". Culture is seen as mass
communication and social structure as social change.

Figure 2 Types of relation between culture (media) and society

		Social structure influences culture	
		YES	NO
Culture influences	YES	Interdependence	Idealism
social structure	NO	Materialism	Autonomy

2.3.1. <u>Interdependence</u> explains that media can not exist
without society. If people do not buy newspapers or
televisionsets, these can not exist. There is a mutual
cohesion and exchange between media and society. This
interaction perspective can explain that the content serves
the interest of the power holders in the economic and
political sense. With respect to conscientisation this
theory sees society as a passive mass society, with
centralized control in the hands of institutions that
exercise power. Those institutions deny the idea that
individuals have the capacity to create alternatives
according to their own interests. There is no space for
change in this theory. One explanation for this is that
people want to relax and be diverted from their problems
like routine work and subjection to bureaucracies.

2.3.2. <u>Idealism</u>, related to the question of the relationship
between mass communication and social change, proposes that
media are primary moulders of society as well as reflectors
of it. There are different uses of this theory, emphasizing
either the technological aspects or the content. The first
approach seems sometimes to be more "materialist" than
"idealist". For developing countries the theory of idealism
has been used many times. Media could help to "modernize"
the people to better their lives. It has been used in
development programmes to extend education, health care
and agriculture. Together with these fiels of social and
economical development, advertising of new products also
provides an example for the purpose to get these adapted
by the people.
With respect to techological aspects, nowadays with the
development of transnational companies, there are only
a few companies which have the monopoly over the means
of communication and the knowledge about it. This either
witholds others from having this power or does lead to
a competition with other forms of communication.
After the "communication revolution" many new forms of
communication became available which has led to a need
for actions and explanations of information. There are
theories (e.g. Frankfurt School) which see the power of
mass communication shaping political and social reality
and holding back structural change. In the mass media
often images of the dominant class and way of behaviours
in society are used to shape political and social reality.
These common ways of seeing and understanding the world
becomes the reality of the people. People get used to view
the western values used in the media, while these are
imposed upon them. According to this approach media can
easily change society and can break down the traditional
values and local structures.

2.3.3. <u>Materialism</u> , related to the question of the
relationship between mass communication and social change,
perceives the media as a reflection and a dependent variable
of social structure. Media can not change society independently

and they reflect the material and social relations of the
world.
To explain the materialist approach I would like to emphasize
two main theories: structural marxism and hegemony.

Within the theory of <u>structural marxism</u> two bases are
distinghuished: the material base and the superstructure.
The material base is constituted by the economic and the
social relations of production. The superstructure covers
law, religion, politics, social consciousness, bound
together by state and ideology. The material base determines
the existence of a particular form of state, ideology and
social consciousness. Any change at the level of the
material base will lead to the transformation of the
superstructure. Ideology is seen in terms of ideas of the
ruling class and reinforces the relations of domination
over the workers by the ruling class (5). Consciousness is
distinghuished into real consciousness and false consciousness.
Real consciousness is a form of social consciousness which
does explain the process in which people become aware of
their interests and the fundamental division within society.
In this process people are willing to change the existing
social and economic relations of production.
False consciousness corresponds to the fact that people do
not see their class interest and are not questioning the
system.
Two considerations should be made with regard to this
approach:
1. Consciousness is only used in the sense of relations of
   production. The key element is ownership and other forms
   of consciousness are not adressed. These can be issues
   like racism or sexism. A worker can be a racist in the
   street or a sexist at home.
2. It does not question the operation of ideology and its
   validity for people. For instance, religion can be very
   important at the level of human psychology and can have
   more value for people than ownership.

<u>Hegemony</u> is different from ideology as described above,

it does not express the ideas of the ruling class only,
but also the acceptance of these ideas by the dominated
class as "common sense". Hegemonic approaches emphasize
the role of ruling ideas and ideologies in false consciousness.
Gramsci (6) perceives hegemony not only as direct political
control, but control through coercion, persuasion and
oppression with consent. The domains of operation are:
education, religion, mass media, trade unions, political
parties and every day life. Hegemonic control means the
ideological control over the cultural, religious, political
as well as economic domains. The concept of hegemony of
Gramsci shows how ideology operates to maintain the
relations of domination in society in order to change
them. Politics are any activities which are intended to
change the nature of the relations of domination, including
"common sense", which has been built up through hegemony
control. The politics of women's liberation tries to
challange the norms and values which have legitimized the
position of women in all domains of society. Such politics
can stimulate women to pay attention to the uncovering
of hidden meaning and underlying structures of meaning in
order to provide a new vision of society.

Both the theories of hegemony and the "superstructure"
emphasize the influence of culture, even if within the
culture itself many class, race and gender relations
exist.

2.3.4. <u>Autonomy</u>
The view that culture and social structure can vary
independently of each other is important to look at.
The other theories try to connect media and social change,
while the autonomy theory is more liberating and may be
even intelectually proven to be correct. In tends to
weaken those media approaches explained in the previous
section which suggest that change is held back by
dominant ideology and the view that countries need modern
media on the western model in order to develop. There can

be variations in cultural forms, even mass mediated forms
in societies with the same economic and political base.
The idea of autonomy has a view of culture to protect the
freedom of societies to make choices about their media
and other cultural forms. This is a very important approach
in which societies can resist modern media institutions
and make their own decisions.

2.4. Extension

I shall give a general view about extension, although
there are many forms of extension, with different
approaches and aiming at different people.
A definition of extension which is often used in the
literature about extension is proposed by van den Ban (7):
"Extension is deliberate assistance to opinion- and
decision making through communication" [my own translation].
Van Gent (8) describes extension as "an intentional and
systematic attempt to be of use for somebodyelse in the
field of knowledge and views, so that this person will be
able to take a descision related to a specific case as
independent and deliberate as possible and as much as
possible corresponding his own interest" [my own translation].

I would like to make some footnotes regarding these
definitions. The problem with the first definition is:
who defines assistance here. According to van den Ban
the client decides what his/her interest is. What the
extensionist perceives as assistance does not necessarily
correspond with what the client sees as assitance. In
both definitions the client comes first and then the
planned intervention. In the framework of this paper it
is important to consider who is determining the interest
of the people. Extension takes place in the tension field
between the client and the planned intervention.
Another important point of consideration is that extension
alone may not induce change due to structural constraints.
There are emancipatory forms of extension in which extension
is seen as an instrument to change structural problems, e.g.
empowerment of the poor.

Van den Ban (9) describes systematically what the activity
of extension aims at [my own translation] :
- to help client(s) to analyse their situation now and what
  it will be in the expected future and
- to become aware of the problems which can arise, thereupon
- through extension of knowledge and experience
- to help these client(s) in respect to a certain problem
- to acquire knowledge and experience as well as to become aware
- in order for client(s) to better:
- act upon the be considered alternatives
- make a justifiable choice
- accept this choice as the optimal in their situation
- to be motivated to execute this choice
- and help the client(s) with the evaluation of their decision
  making
- in order to enrich their capacities to take justifiable
  decisions.

2.5. Conscientisation

Paulo Freire (10) perceives conscientisation as the
learning process to understand social, political and economical
contrasts and take actions against the oppressive relations
of reality. The movement of reality has to do with the
process of understanding the contradictions of reality,
this means to touch problems of the interest of power.
Conscientisation mobilizes people to become subjects of
a historical process which they are part of, in stead of
being objects of a world of top-down authority lines,
funding and habits of thought.
The ideology of bottom-up empowerment through dialogue
is very important in this theory. Freire define dialogue
as: " an interactive process through which humans reflect
and analyse, become able to name and understand their
situation in the world and hence to act on it and to
transform it". The problem many times is that those at the
top do not want to dialogue, their interest is to keep the
control over the people. People are made objects in their
own reality, while they are subjects in the world and with

the world. Praxis is proposed as action and reflection.
People do relate to the world in a critical way, they act,
change, reflect and deal with problems. The integrated
person is a person as subject and the adaptive person is
a person as object, like an animal which adjusts to the
environment. Freire uses humanism in the sense that people
are subjects, can create, recreate and take decisions.
If people are in a world in which they are denied as human
being, imprisoned or stuck to the structure or its parts,
than there is a need for a liberating struggle. People are
often conscious about their live in their historical, social
and cultural reality. They are conscious of their oppression,
however the experience of a dialogue of participation with
the top is often not present. Another point may be that
people have an attitude of distrust towards the top, so
people feel it is better not to dialogue with the top.
There are many reasons behind this of historical, cultural,
sociological and structural nature (e.g. feudal structures,
a pre-colonial structure).
In the next section I shall elaborate the concept of
conscientisation and its relation to extension.

2.5.1. Extension vs. Communication

Freire (11) defines rural extension as " the educational
and technical assistance efforts of outside agencies acting
through extension agents or extension workers to "extend"
or transmit to peasants knowledge that is designed to
improve farming practices, etc.". Freire perceives the
difference between communication and extension as
follows. Within the concept of extension the extensionist
is viewed as the one with knowledge and has to give
contents into empty consciousness of people. This notion
is related to the false conception of knowledge. Knowledge
is seen as something neutral and in its imposed traditional
sense, knowledge is perceived as being of more value than
what people know already. Freire proposes the need for
sharing knowledge with others as a condition for knowing,
through dialogue and commitment. Everybody knows and is

prepared to know more. Knowledge is created and recreated
by all human beings. The educators of knowledge prefer to
control this knowledge, this shows that education is not
a neutral act, but a political act. Many of these educators
work in the name of science, and do not question people's
reality. So people are viewed as passive receivers. The
extensionists feel that it is wasting time to dialogue
with peasants about a technical method which they do not
know yet. Through this way of transmitting knowledge,
people are placed in a position which domesticates rather
than liberates. There is a need for a system of relationship
between the peasant and the extensionist in which both
technology and humanity are involved. Conscientisation
can only operate through the relations of transformation
human beings established between themselves and the world,
it is not an individual act, but a social one.
Consciousness-raising as a feminist method of empowerment
has been used in some places in the World. In the next
section I shall examine consciousness-raising groups in
the West.

2.5.2. <u>Consciousness-raising</u> as a feminist method of
empowerment has reached thousands of women in Northern
America and Western Europe in the 1960s and 70s. This
happened in small groups, women learned from each others
experiences and personal life was seen as political. In
those groups was no qualified leader, everybody could be
a leader. Many women gained a lot in the area of
consciousness. More knowledge emerged about the oppression
of women. Women started to fight against their oppression
and started to organize womenpower. Also at theoretical level
a lot of progress has been made. It was expected that from
the individual experiences of women, collective action could
be established. This was not a goal in itself, because any
aim depended on the group needs. Womenpower is still limited.
Many of these groups did not make a link with the
sup erstructure and the material base, while these are
also important issues of women's oppression. Some of these

groups feel a need to put this method of consciousness
raising in a wider perspective, to guard towards social
action.

The difference between this feminist method and Freire's
method is that the last method does lead to social action.
The principle of the personal life as political, as used
in these women groups is not present in Freire's method.
Freire perceives the oppressed as one homogeneous group.
In his method specific issues related to male-female
relationships are not adressed. Important to mention is,
that also women do not constitute a homogeneous group.
There is a diversity of women with different class, race
and age background. Many of these women consciousness
raising groups were characterized by western middle class
women who had difficulties in taking up issues like class
and race, because women's oppression in society was seen
as the main core of the problem rather than other forms of
oppression.

2.6. Summary

I have analysed in the preceding sections communication,
mass communication and extension and the relation of
these concepts to conscientisation. The analysis has shown
that generally conscientisation is not a part of communication
processes. The sender transmits messages with the intention
to get these adopted by the recipient. In mass communication
there is hardly a possibility of reciprocity between
communicator and recipient, while in interpersonal communication
processes it is more possible to dialogue.
The approaches about mass communication try to connect media
and social change. Idealism emphasizes that media can change
society, while materialism emphasizes that media can not
change society independently. Within the approach of
interdependence there is no space for change, because there
is a denial of the view that people have the capacity to
create alternatives according to their own needs and interests.
The autonomy approach does not connect media and social change

and looks at what people themselves want and can do.
This theory is important when we address the selfdetermination
of rural women in the Third World.

Notes:
(1) A. Fuglesang, About Understanding - ideas and observations
    on cross-cultural communication, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation,
    1982, p-20.
(2) M. Kunczik, Communication and Social Change, communication
    manual, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 1984, p-28
(3) B. Klandermans & F. Seydel, eds., Overtuigen en Activeren:
    publieksbeïnvloeding in theorie en praktijk, Assen, 1987,
    p-16 referring to Stappers, a.o. 1983
(4) D. McQuail, Mass Communication Theory:an introduction,
    SAGE, 1987, pp. 95-103
(5) K. Marx, in German Ideology, ed.   C.J.   Arthur,New York, 1970
(6) A. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, International Publishers,
    New York, 1971
(7) A.W. van den Ban, Inleiding tot de voorlichtingskunde,
    Boom, Meppel, 1974, p-12
(8) B. van Gent, Voorlichtingskunde, een overzicht,
    Boom, Meppel, 1985, p-12
(9) A.W. van den Ban, Inleiding tot de voorlichtingskunde,
    Boom, Meppel, 1974, pp. 12-13
(10) P. Freire, Pedagogy of the oppressed, Herder and Herder,
    1971
(11) P. Freire, Education: The Practice of Freedom, Writers and
    Readers Publishing Cooperative London, 1974

CHAPTER 3: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RURAL WOMEN IN THE THIRD WORLD AND COMMUNICATION

Introduction

In the previous chapter I have examined communication at
a theoretical level. In this chapter I shall elaborate
the relationship between rural women in the Third World
and communication. Given the fact of lack of research
available about rural women and communication I perceive
the following sections as important in the framework of
my research paper.
In the beginning I examine the position of rural women in
the Third World and a general picture shall be given about
the communication environment in the rural Third World.
A model will be examined of the process of bringing
information to people. After this an anlysis is made of
information programmes for the rural poor, both women and
men, and of the international dimension of communication.

3.1. Rural Women in the Third World

Women do play an important role in agrarian societies in
the Third World. Research has shown that women represent
half of the world's adult population and one-third of the
labour force, they perform for nearly two-thirds of all
working hours and receive only one-tenth of the world's
income and own less than one percent of the world's
property (1). It has been estimated that women directly
produce over 50% of the world's food supply. Women are
the main family providers.
There are different kinds of agrarian production societies:
societies with subsistence oriented production, commodity
production or combinations of these two kinds of production.
Rural women in the Third World are differentiated with
respect to their activities, resources they can mobilize to
persue them and the incomes they derive from them.
In this paper I shall not go into detail about the differences,
but I offer some general remarks about rural women in the

Third World which give an understanding about the position
of women and the relations between men and women.

Women play different roles in different agrarian societies.
The division of labour between men and women, the sexual
division of labour, is socially constructed and assigns
certain tasks to women and others to men. There is a
wide variation in the sexual division of labour and this
has changed over time. The sexual division of labour in
capitalist countries implies a differential valuation
of female and male tasks which tends generally value
women's tasks less than men's tasks and this may be
manifested in the differential access to and control over
resources. The valuation of women's tasks, in ideological
and material terms may explain women's subordination. It
"appears to express, embody, and furthermore to perpetuate,
female subordination" (2).

The fact that rural women in the Third World generally
have limited access to and control over land, labour
and capital is another indication of their subordinated
position in society. A key determinant in agrarian societies
is the access agrarians have to land as a means of
production. There are more factors which determine their
position in agrarian societies such as access to cultivation
and employment opportunities and other production resources.
The possibilities of both women and men of having access
to and control over resources tend to be mostly to the
disadvantage of women. Women generally have indirect access
to resources, in relation to men. Women's status is often
defined by that of their husbands and/or other male
relatives. People who have and control production assets
have a purpose of accumulation and a stronger bargaining
position. The material and immaterial base for rural women
in the Third World consists mainly of their children,
husband and extended family.

The world of the family, the so called private world, is
the domain of women. Women do have power in the private

sphere, but this is not translatable into social power
or position in the larger society (3). Traditionally
women are not used to "participate" in the so called
public world. This is perceived as being the world of
the men. Generally men prohibit their wives from the
public world and women have to present their interests
through their husband and/or male relatives. This lack
of experience in the public sphere and lack of authority
have implications for class consciousness or collective
solidarity. Many women do depend on their husbands and
on the other hand women themselves consider the household
as private, which hinders the above mentioned actions.
The notion of the household as private is related to the
concept of the household made by policy makers. The
household is defined as a basic unit, all the household
members will benefit equally and the man is considered
the head of the household. Policy makers do not look at
what happens inside the household, because that is the
private world, and not public domain. This has an impact
on planning, statistics and policy making.

There is in recent decades an increase of the number of
rural households headed by women e.g. caused by wars and
emigration. At present the number of these households is
estimated to be one-third of the total. Due to limited
access to and control over resources and women's subordinated
position in society, many of the female headed households
are among the poorer strata.

Rural women in the Third World do get information through
different forms of communication. In the following section
I shall examine the information background in the rural
Third World.

3.2. The Rural Information Environment in the Third World

To give a picture of the communication environment in the
rural Third World is not an easy task, because there are many

differences among Third World countries and also among
different types of media. The countries can be different
with respect to their governmental structure and levels
of development. Also within countries there are differences.
In general, the majority of people in the rural Third World
lives under conditions of real poverty. Based on objective
standards this means that they have less calorie intake,
low productivity, high workburden and do have less access
to and control over resources and services. Among them,
the women are even more disadvantaged depending on their
social and class position. Many Third World countries do
depend upon advanced countries in the economic sense.

First of all I shall give a generalized picture of the
different forms of communication in the rural Third World.
1. The <u>interpersonal</u> forms of communication:
   The richest and largest form of communication is the
   interpersonal form of communication. This is a whole
   network of personal and informal contacts through
   which people give and receive information. This happens
   through the family, neighbourhoods, market places and
   washing places. Such networks serve the kinds of content
   that usually flow in each neighbourhood, such as news,
   cultural information reinforcing traditional values and
   price information on local goods (4).
   My question is why this rich resource of informal mass
   communication is very seldom used in development information
   programmes. I refer here to the fact that the possibilities
   to dialogue and to exchange information, are still not
   used sufficiently.

2. The <u>mediated</u> forms of mass communication:
   In general in the rural Third World are less mediated
   forms of mass communication available than in the urban
   areas and than in the developed countries. The mass medium
   that is often available is the radio. Other mass media that
   may be available are newspapers, pamphlets, posters or
   films. The function of these forms of communication is not

only to provide information, but also to offer entertainment.
Sometimes a telephone or mail service is available. These
can be seen as interpersonal communication, although there
is a technical medium between sender and receiver.
There may be also forms of communication available from
and to local groups who use mass media, and/or group
media like posters, exhibitions and wallpapers.

3. The <u>social and political</u> institutions:
   Another source of information in the rural Third World
   is through social and political institutional networks,
   such as schools, churches, development projects and
   programmes. Usually the information given by these
   institutions serve to promote the continuation of the
   structure. There are some types of information that directly
   benefit people. For instance agricultural extension agents
   who offer new information and beside this information they
   may also offer material resources as credits and seeds.
   In the field of health primairy health care workers give
   information about health and may also provide medicines.
   The aim of these development programmes is to improve the
   lives of the rural people.

   3.3. <u>A Model of the Process of Information's Spread and Effect</u>

   In the process of bringing information to the people,
   different stages need to be distinghuished. To explain
   this within the context of rural development, I use a
   figure compiled by Emile G. McAnany (5). To read this model
   you have to start from the outermost circle, each following
   stage is needed in order to have an impact. Access is a
   condition for achieving exposure and both are neccessary
   for achieving content, etc.

FIGURE 3

A Progressive Model for Mass Media Impact
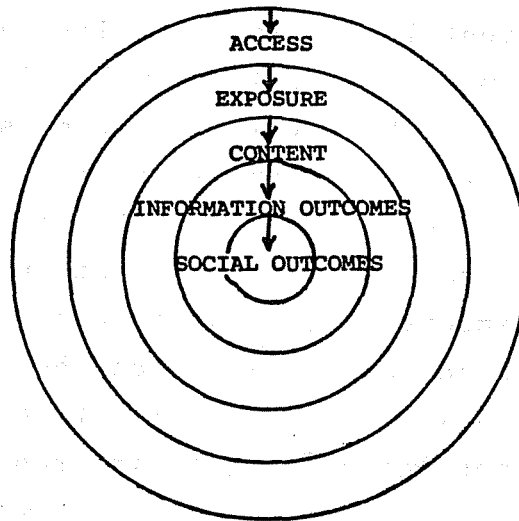
Source: Compiled by the author.

I shall now explain these five stages, to assist the
understanding of how this model works.

In most rural areas, access in the sense of availability
regarding mass media is primarily, to print and radio.
This can be individual access, but it might also be a
situation of a shared magazine or radio. Radio can be
more accessible than print, because of the low literacy
rate, which is among women in many Third World countries
even lower than among men. Another point of consideration
is the quality of the signals received. In some countries
it is more difficult to send messages to the rural areas
than in others due to infrastructural problems (mountains,
lack of roads). As explained in section 3.1. people in the
rural areas can also have access to political and social
institutions.So far access is limited to the reception
of mesages, it is important to consider also the access
to participation in the construction of the messages and
the distribution. Many times the top-down approach, with
the people viewed as passive receivers, is still used.

Exposure can be explained as hearing, seeing and experiencing.
The meaning of the words is in this sense very important.
Words have concepts on the base of a social system and
these show the way of thought and functioning of the

related reality. So can certain words completely different
be perceived in different localities. For instance,
democracy in Nicargua means something completely different
than democracy in Sweden, while the same word is used.
Signals can be transmitted differently in different
situations (verbal, non-verbal and with the use of
techniques), which can have different impact on people.
The dialogue is also important when we adress the effect.
If people can not feedback especially when the information
is about a completely new subject, it will be more
difficult to get the message adopted by the people.

About the content many studies have been made. Content
can be separated into entertainment programmes, educational
programmes, information, music and others. There are many
different kind of programmes which can be offered by media
through one channel. It is important to recognize specific
images, norms and values in the different programmes.
For instance, when a new product is offered through
media, implicitly modern and progressive living is told
or shown and according to these notions consequently
better. Furthermore specific images about women are sent.
Generally rural Third World women are not recognized as
producers. Information regarding agricultural production
is mainly made for men and is about men's reality.

The next step of the model is the information outcomes.
This refers to what has been learned from the programmes,
as a result of exposure. These outcomes can be a result
from a single exposure and from exposures over a period of
time. Exposure may happen at an indivdual or group level.
The impact of the exposure can be affective, cognitive or
attitudinal. About the effect of communications, studies
have been made of which I want to elaborate two main models,
which are also related to the last step of the model.
These two main models are: Stimulus-Reaction model (S-R)
and Stimulus-Organism-Reaction model (S-O-R). The S-R
model is the first major theoretical model in communication

research and is still important. Mass communication in
this model is proposed as a mechanical process, in which the
mass media distribute contents which will be passively
received by the public. This will all be along the lines
intended by the communicator. Society is seen as a mass
society. The only thing that mass media have to do is to
send correct messages. Correct in the sense to reach ·
their goals.
Within communication research questions were raised such
as: Are people just passive receiver and do people have
their believe systems, their norms and values regarding
mass media? As a result another model has been established:
the S-O-R model. This model proposes that between the
message and the effect, are intervening variables, so
called predispositions (6). The effect will not always
be in the same line as the stimulus. The intervening
variables can be distinghuished in two categories
according to Klandermans: communication dependent
predispositions and communicaiton independent predispositions.
The first category refers to characteristics direct
related to the messages e.g. if a message is believable
the effect will be greater. The second category refers
to personal, social and/or economic characteristics, e.g.
higher educated people are more interested in news and
newspapers than lower educated people, they are more
directed towards entertainment.

Social outcome, is the final stage of the model. This
means any social change resulting from the programmes.
It includes both short- and long- term outcomes. The
results can be changes in the level of health care and
agriculture productivity.

In order to examine the relationship between communications
and rural women in the Third World I analyse in the following
section, information programmes for the rural poor, both
women and men, in the Third World.

3.4. Development Information Programmes for the Rural Poor

The assumption in many development programmes is that
information made available contributes towards the
improvement of the lives of the people. Development
programmes are often based on models of economic growth
and modernization. Examples of these development information
programmes are in the field of education, health, agriculture
and family planning. Development policies based on economic
growth are mainly originated in the North. A model of
economic growth shows that for the increase in the per
capita income, a raise in the production is required,
which partly depends on capital accumulation. However in
developing countries the surplus of the production of
goods is low, because of the low per capita. Another
important fact is that the surplus goes mainly to the
classes who own the means of production (7). For developing
countries it is not so easy to break out the vicious circle
of poverty. Access to growth is generally kept for a
special class. The role of information in the development
process is seen as important by policy makers, in the sense
that once information is made accessible, the position of
people in the Third World will be better. The danger of
this phenomenon is that the role of information may be
overemphasized. There are many factors which determine
the situation of the rural poor in the Third World.
Information can not be seen as an independent variable.
In this section I would like to mention some constraints
on an information approach, constraints at macro and
micro levels.

Often government's priority in the Third World is not
the rural poor. These people are the most difficult to
reach, high in numbers, are less educated and do have little
material resources. The already existing conditions make
it more difficult to communicate with the rural poor (8).
The situation of the rural poor is determined by access
to assets and distribution of assets, labour relations

and government intervention. The priority of the
government is generally not structural changes, such as
changes in landtenure. Among the rural poor is a growing
number of landless labourers, both men ànd women. For
them agricultural information is irrelevant. The knowledge
will go to the farmers with land and probably among them
the ones who can have more productivity on their land
(under circumstances as farms size, received credit or
supplementary income) and not to the ones whose productivity
is already at a maximum of efficiency. There is still a
tendency to see the failure of programmes and projects,
because the target group did not use the information
given to them. The people are blamed, while generally
within the given information social, economical and
political elements of the problem are not taken into
consideration (9). Another problem may be that rural poor
have a built-in bias against information from the government.
They may feel that the government is not really intent
on improving their lives. This is especially the case
where people are at the bottom of the social system,
unless the government has already taken some steps
in favour of them.

The problems described above are related to the macro
level. The following section will examine some constraints
on information programmes at the micro level.

Research about the lives of the target group is often not
sufficiently carried out in quality and quantity. Generally
programmes are made with assumed needs and concerns for the
rural people. This can have tremendous consequences for the
lives of the people. It is important to look at who is
determing the interests of the people concerned. Often the
interests are determined by other people, the target group
can hardly participate in the planning. This can lead to
situations that people get information, which they may not
understand because of the language used, in the broadest
sense, which can be alienated from their actual situation.

The information may not lead to agricultural productivity,
because the productivity is already at a maximum of efficiency
or resources needed are not available or accessible.
In many developing countries the approach of "integration
into development" is used. An important question which
arises from this approach is what kind of development
are people integrating into. Many programmes and projects
are made _for_ them and not _with_ the people.

Another question which arises is who is benefitting from
this development and information: men, women, which social
classes? Generally the ones who are the most likely to
take information or to give information to, are the
relatively better off. This widens the gap between
different social classes. Another consequence may be
that information widens the gap between the position of
men and women. Often agricultural information is given to
men and the women do not get the information. Women's
role as agricultural producer is hardly recognized. While
in many situations in the Third World, women and not the
men are the main family providers, even in areas where
the norm is otherwise. Due to these kind of programmes
women remain outside the mainstream of agricultural
development.

The organisational structure of projects may have impact
on results of the project. In general hierarchical
structures limit the participation of rural people to
bring to the fore their interests. In many projects and
programmes in the rural areas, is a lack of trained people.
A problem with training is that often people are trained
outside (another country or in the town), were they generally
learn alienated concepts, theories and practices. It is
then difficult for the people being trained, to use these
in the rural areas or it may not correspond with their culture
at all. Often high value is given to this kind of training
and as a consequence it may be that the trained people
prefer to work in the city, e.g. at a ministry.

The role of information and communication in development
is at international level a phenomenon. So far I have
mainly focussed on information through social and political
institutions and less on mass communication. In the next
section I shall elaborate the international dimension of the
role of information and communication in development in
general.

3.5. The Role of Information and Communication in Development: The International Dimension

International communication refers to communication
across borders. Communication has always existed throughout
history, however since the last three decades more forms
of communication exist due to technology, the development
of transnational corporations and the international
consumerist world.

The information industry became a phenomenon in the 1950s
through the growth of transnational corporations. Only a
few companies control most of the market, because these
have the captial, the knowledge and the technology. Many
developing countries felt that since they had missed
already the "industrial revolution", they did not want
to miss the "information revolution". The use of media
is perceived by Third World countries as important to
develop their countries. The assumption of information
programmes is that information is easily accessible.
Within mass communication a channel is used to which
everybody can be connected. The sender does not make
exceptions for the forthcoming receivers. It suggests
that everybody can have access to information. We live
now in a period which is called the "information society"
(10). Access is not only limited to availability, it is
important to consider also the access to participation
in the construction of messages and the distribution.
Most of the information is produced to meet the needs
of those who own the communication systems. By analysing
the power relations in historical perspective, we see

that fundamentally not many changes have occurred. In
agricultural societies land is power, in industrial
societies capital is power and in "information societies"
information is power. Not everybody can have land or
capital or information. Many Third World countries are
still influenced and controled by communication systems
and messages from outside, especially from the metropolitan
centres. Some alternatives have been established, like the
Inter Press Service, the only professional press bureau
from and about the Third World. And more alternatives
are built up, but generally the West or Western values
dominate the information world.

3.5.1. The International Debate

Since the establishment of the United Nations, after the
second world war, information- and communication concerns
are discussed at an international level.
The period of 1973-1976, which is called the period of
decolonization of communication, was an important time
for developing countries. The governments of the
non-aligned countries had analysed the situation and
demanded a new International Information Order, the one
which still existed reflected the colonial times. Many
debates took place at international level during this
period, especially about the view that governments of
Third World countries were against the free flow of
information across borders, as conceived by the North.
Governments in the North are afraid to undermine their
press freedom and do not want to have protectionist
borders between countries, with respect to the flow of
information (11). In 1978, in a meeting of UNESCO, a
resolution was established for a more justifiable and
effective world order for information and communication.
The North dominated by highlighting the importance of
bringing knowledge, technology and financial resources
to the Third World.
In 1980 the New World Information and Communication Order
has been established on paper in UNESCO. Although the
non-aligned countries formed a block in this whole debate,

they gave up their political wishes in exchange for
technical assistance and financial aid from the North.
The governments of non-aligned countries wanted to have
an exchange of technology and knowledge about e.g. journalism
and filmmaking. Beside these, they wanted also a fundamental
restructering of flows and content of information, just
like in economic sense,governments of Third World countries
want restructering.
The non-aligned countries are now still users of a
communication product of which the knowledge, technology
and control is in the hands of a minority. The Third World
is affected by cultural imperialism of the West and often
information is alienated from their own reality. News in
the West about the Third World gives a distorted reality,
providing more sensational news than educational information
(12).
The New World Information and Communication Order as proposed
by the North tries to obscure that this Order has to do with
economy. There is no denial that the concern of information
and communication is a structural political-economic problem.

3.5.2. <u>Research about Women and the Media</u>

UNESCO's programme of activities in the field of women
and communication started two decades ago. Nevertheless
there is still a lack of detailed analysis and systematic
articulation of the women's question. The second Medium-Term
Plan (1984-1989), adopted at UNESCO's 4th Extraordinary
General Conference in 1982, reveals the analysis that it
is not so easy to led women integrate into development,
which is mainly determined by men, within the framework of
existing social relations and the status traditionally
reserved for women (13). Research available about the
relationship between women and media is mainly done in
North America and Western Europe, the analysis of the
situation is originated there. This research has been
dominated, especially in the seventies by a liberal
perspective, focussing on the presence, absence and
circumstances of women in media content and institutions.

Through solving these inequities within the existing
system the problems could be solved, according to this
analysis. There is a growing awareness that women's
oppression can not be solved by focussing on gender alone
and the notion of gender oppression as a simple reflection
of capitalism seemed not to be fully applicable.
Throughout the world it is needed to have more research
about content analysis and audience effects. There is
still little known about how audiences process and use
portrayals of gender over time. Communication research
about comparative studies of women's roles and representation
in the communication systems of different nations, studies
of gender with respect to new communication technology,
and research at a variety of levels on gender considerations
in development communication, is hardly available (14).

3.6. Summary

I have shown in the previous sections that rural women
in the Third World form the most disadvantaged group in
the world. They are important producers. Information
about this fact is nearly never brought to the fore or
perceived. I have examined the constraints on information
programmes for the rural poor. On the one hand some
information directly does benefit women and men and on
the other hand information contributes to the continuation
of the dominant structures. Many programmes are made for
the people and not with the people. Generally the makers
of the information and communication programmes prefer to
keep the control over the people. At the international
level, the role of information and communication is a
recognized phenomenon. Within UNESCO and other international
agencies debates take place about the relationship between
the North and Third World countries. However the women's
question is still not articulated sufficiently.

Notes:

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(4) E.G. McAnany, Communications in the Rural Third World:
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CHAPTER 4: HOW CAN COMMUNICATIONS CONTRIBUTE TO SELFDETERMINATION

OF RURAL WOMEN IN THE THIRD WORLD

Introduction

So far a description has been given about the situation of
rural women in the Third World with respect to communications.
The major proposition of my research paper is the need of
their selfdetermination. Selfdetermination is defined in the
sense that women can do something to help themselves.
Selfdetermination is a process and differs in each specific
social, economical and political context. However an attempt
will be made to answer my researach question: how communications
can contribute to selfdetermination of rural women in the
Third World. I will examine some dimensions of importance
in the process of selfdetermination. After this a model of
participatory communication shall be elaborated which is
of interest in order to give a tentative answer to my
research question.

4.1. Interest Representation

An important dimension of selfdetermination of rural women
in the Third World is that women can bring to the fore their
own interests. The extent to which interest representation
can be realized is determined by relations between men and
women (gender relations) and relations among women (class,
race, religion). Women's status is often defined by that
of their husbands and/or male relatives. Generally women
have to present their interest through their male relatives,
which may effect interest representation of rural women in
the Third World. Social differentation contributes to the
understanding of different interests among women. However
within one class not all women shall perceive the same
interests. For instance, women can aim at individual
practical solutions or they can try to reach structural
changes. Within feminist literature a number of different
conceptions prevail about what women's interests are. These

rest implcitly or explicitly up on different theories
of the causes of gender inequities (1).

In the framework of my research paper my emphasis, with
respect to interest representation of rural women in the
Third World, is on endogenous and exogenous interests.
By endogenous interests I understand interest representation
as, interests brought to the fore by women themselves and
exogenous interests refers to interests proposed by others,
for the women concerned.

4.2. Mobilisation

Mobilisation of rural women in the Third World is another
dimension of importance in the process of selfdetermination.
Mobilisation is the process of activating people to pursue
their common interests. Here again the questions arise, who
is activating the women and who is defining the common interests
of the women.
The material and human resources are important in the process
of mobilisation. Women will not risk their material and
immaterial base. It is necessary to allow the understanding
which claim upon resources are prioritized by the women
themselves. Important claim upon resources of women can be:
their relations with their husbands, kinship or patron,
their material base and their religion.
Political (e.g. influence of the State), cultural and
ideological (e.g. predominance of a patriarchal structure)
aspects are important in respect to mobilisation processes.
These all establish different soical conditions for mobilisation.
The problems faced by women in a certain structural and
cultural situation are easily recognized as the same as
confronted in another situation, but similar problems can
not always be solved with the same strategies (2).
First of all, before taking actions, it is important to have
a high level of awareness or analyses, in order to identify
the phenomena and to share these names. Not the leaders should
define the phenomena seen from their theoretical perspective,

they should do this with the women concerned. Only then
it is possible to speak of real mobilisation.

4.3. <u>Alternative communication</u>

The previous sections have shown that there is a need to
transform the dominant communication structures. People
are for a major part informed by professional communicators,
while the public has the right to inform as a social and
individual right.
My main argument is for an alternative to the present
dominant structures. Within literature about alternative
communication emphasis has been given to small-scale
self-reliant projects which try to turn away from the
existing society. In this section I shall elaborate a
model of alternative communication which aims at a
fundamental transformation of not only the dominant
communication structure but of society as a whole (3).

The objective is participatory communication, not only
in the communication process itself, but also within the
overall socio-political structures. A resonable and
material participation of the public plays a very
important role, which should be defined as the totality
of all kind of social groups, from ecological movements
to the church. Starting with the aim of making the public
the subject of communication activities. A fundamental
precondition for participation is a certain minimum
level of education. The communication structure needs
then to be characterized by a high degree of participation
and to contribute directly and effectively to enlarge all
forms of active participation in the whole society and
particularly in the communication media. People have to
participate in their own communication structures and
which produce and distribute information for them. This
has nothing to do with the choice between soicalism or
capitalism, but with real participation of people according
to their needs. The communication structure has to be

flexible. It has to adapt easily and effectively to the
change in the needs of the population resulting from the
public evaluation of communication or from the society
as a whole. Individual and collective appeal and
accountability have to be created to guarantee equal
participation. Everybody should bring to the fore
their interest in a democratic way.

Stangelaar describes (4) the fundamental characteristics
of this model of participatory communication [my own
translation] :

1. Interaction between sender and receiver, through which
   mutual communication possibilities can be enlarged.
2. Production and distribution of messages, which pursue
   an interaction between the informational and cultural
   values of daily-life experiences of the public and the
   professional communicators.
3. Accessibility to form and content of these messages and
   the distribution activities to the public, for such a
   minimum educational level is required.
4. Access to production facilities and distribution channels
   for the public for control and rectification as well as
   for their own use.
5. Organisational participation of the people in the educational
   structures. These performing a task within and outside the
   media structures and in the governmental institutions, in
   which both the education- and the communication policy
   are formulated and implemented.
6. Organisation of the public in respect to a critical
   following and eventually changing of media activities and
   products, which many different people consume.
7. To establish representative and coordinating institutions,
   in which interests of society in its totality could be
   promoted. With delegation of the governments's right to
   inform to this level and with participation of the public
   and professional organisations.
8. Evaluation structures, which can guarantee and inform the
   public about the effects,in terms of the level of activity
   and multidirectionality of social processes of communication.

4.3.1. The Origin of the Alternative

To arrive at an understanding of the relationship between
alternative communication and the total alternative to
the present society, the origin of the alternative will
be examined in this section.

Stangelaar (5) analyses the origin of the total alternative
to the present society with reference to J. Galtung (1979).
If the assumption is that every development has two basic
purposes: to satisfy fundamental human needs and that the
satisfaction of the needs of one may not go at the cost
of another, the problem is the interaction between the
problems of underdevelopment and overdevelopment. These
problems need to be perceived in the context of allocation
of material and immaterial resources. This means that
underdevelopment implies overdevelopment in other parts
of the world. It is the instability of over- and underdevelopment
which makes it impossible to solve these problems within
the dominant structures and which will lead to alternatives.

To explain this a rather simple division is made:
material welfare and immaterial poverty in the industrialized
countries and immaterial welfare and material poverty in
the Third World.
It are self-protection reactions of people which conflict
with the dominant forms of living, promoted by the existing
structure. Within this division, described above, an
attempt has been made to find an equilibrium in material
and immaterial consumption and production.
Alternatives can be passive (minimum alternative) and
active (maximum alternative). Passive alternatives will
not lead to mobilisation and organisation in the first
place, but these can become active. The soft forms of
alternatives, which are relatively active, are formed
through human self-protection reactions of people, against
hard forms of alternatives and dominant forms of living.
It is important to form a society in which people can have

these self-protection reactions and the public can
decide on their own level of participation and activity.
Only then is it possible to speak of selfdetermination
of people.

With respect to alternative communication as part of the
total alternative to the present society, the division
of Galtung, is only partly of importance, especially
regarding the view that economic development within
capitalistic societies will lead to social, political
and cultural underdevelopment. Galtung seems to suggest
that economic stagnation will lead to social, political
and cultural development. However it are the so called
underdevelopment tendencies in economical, social, political
and cultural live, which give resistance.

4.3.2. Some Examples

There is a growing interest for endogenous and self-reliant
communication structures, organised by the government and
non-governmental organisations, such as women's groups,
political parties and grassroot groups. These are
organised forms of alternative communication for the
creation of the total alternative to the present society.
While there are also marginal, creative and spontaneous
actions. These are not yet forms of alternative communication,
because these forms are not aiming at mobilisation and
organisation in a broader sense. Such actions are important
and may become durable alternative activities or projects,
or can be absorbed by the dominant forms of communication.
Through this it will loose its marginalized character.
Many of the alternative communication projects started at
a micro level and express the power of mobilisation and
organisation. Alternative communication can aim at the
active, the so called conscious people, or at the less
conscious people. With respect to the last group, it is
important that people participate in the communication
processes, this means that media becomes social property.

In stead of giving people information about the reality
and hindering them from informing themselves really
about the reality, people generate information themselves
through participation in the communication processes.

4.3.3. Participatory Communication, a Feminist Perspective

The model of participatory communication as part of the
total alternative to the present society, as described
in section 4.3., shows a possibility for equal participation
of people in communication processes controled by them.
I feel not satisfied by merely saying that this holds
both for men and women. Because this incorporating of
women does not necessarily mean to changes in favour of
women. The model of participatory communication can be
useful for feminists, if within this model feminism will
be incorporated. It is not easy to formulate a feminist
perspective on this model and I alone can not accomplish
this. The strength of the women's movement, although some
consider this as a weakness, is that any woman who feels
committed and has something to say can contribute to the
formulation of the vision of a new society (6). I hope
that my thoughts can contribute to this.

The analysis has shown that hierarchical structures and
dualistic divisions have shaped our present reality and the
society as a whole. The advanced people in the North are
the symbol of progress for "backward" people, men became
the symbol of progress for women and urban became the
symbol of progress for rural. As long as there are also
no equal relations between men and women, the model of
participatory communication as part of the total
alternative to the present society will not work.
One consideration is that the patriarchal sexual division
of labour has to change. The sexual division of labour
refers to the division of labour along gender lines, the
social organisation of women's work. It assigns certain
tasks to women and others to men. The concept of sexual

division of labour implies a different valuation of
female and male tasks which tends to be mostly to the
disadvantage of women. The valuation of women's tasks
is one of the main causes for the unequal relations
between men and women. The sexual division of labour
may be manifested in the differential access to and
control over resources and to a large extent gives an
understanding to women's subordination. The emancipation
of women has to go together with the emancipation of men.
If men do not fight against women's subordination and
still perceive themselves as the most important and
progressive in society, not many changes will occur.
Men have to share work, which usually is done by women,
on equal terms with women. Women are integrating in a
world determined by men and men have to work too in the
work usually done by women. There needs to be an equal
relationship, in material and ideological terms, between
men and women.
Another consideration is that may be women want first to
have more autonomy, to develop their own alternative
communication as described in the model of participatory
communication. This needs then to be according to the
interests of women.

4.4. Summary

In this chapter a tentative answer has been given to my
research question: how communications can contribute to
selfdetermination of rural women in the Third World.
Selfdetermination is defined as a process. A model of
participatory communication is examined for alternative
communication as part of the process leading to a
fundamental transformation of not only the dominant
communication structure but of society as a whole.
Within this model special emphasis should be given to
women. The assumption can not merely be that this model
holds both for men and women, because the integration

of women in a world determined by men has shown that
still not many changes have occurred in the unequal power
relations between men and women, in favour of men.
However, I propose this model as important for feminists too,
if feminism will be incorporated in this model.
In the following chapter, the conclusion and recommendations
for governmental and non-governmental development projects
shall be given.

Notes:

(1) M. Molyneux, "Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's
    Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua" in
    Feminist Studies, vol.11, no.2, summer 1985, pp.227-254
(2) M. Schuler, "Conceptualizing and Exploring Issues and
    Strategies" in Empowerment and the Law - Strategies of
    Third World women, ed. M. Schuler, OEF International USA,
    1986, p-13
(3) F. Stangelaar, Alternatieve Kommunikatie, Katholieke
    Universiteit Nijmegen, Mexiko-Stad, 1982
(4) ibid, p-205
(5) ibid, pp. 207-210
(6) M. Mies, Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale,
    Zed Press, London, 1986, p-210

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most often information through the different forms of
communication is imposed on people and does not include
the creation of selfdetermination. Generally the sender
transmits messages with the intention to get these
adopted by the recipient. The right to inform, as a
social and individual right, is delegated for a major
part to professional communicators. The creation of
knowledge is in the hands of them. Hardly any information
is available about the lives of rural women in the Third
World. The information we have is partial and unbalanced.
The analyses and interpretations which are accessible,
are mainly originate in the North and made by men. The
situation which exist now, shows a gap between the
awareness of a minority and the awareness of society as
a whole.
The aim should be to transform the dominant communication
structure. I argue for a fundamental transformation of
not only the dominant communication structure but of
society as a whole. Communication is one dimension
within the process of selfdetermination: people doing
something to help themselves, and my focus in this
research paper is on the relationship between communication
and selfdetermination of rural women in the Third World.
The major proposition is the need of their selfdetermination.

The analysis in the preceding sections has shown that
women in the rural Third World form the most marginalised
group, due to limited access to and control over resources
and women's subordinated position in society as a whole.
The sexual division of labour implies a differential
valuation, in ideological and material terms, of female
and male tasks which tends generally value women's tasks
less. The undervaluation of women's tasks is reflected in
their possibilities of access to resources. The fact that
they have only limited access to and control over resources
is an indication of their subordinate and dependent status.

Equal valuation of both women's and men's tasks is necessary,
together with equal access to and control over resources
and services. Women should have no problems to assert their
rights and to bring to the fore their interests and
concerns. Rural women in the Third World do get
information through a variety of different forms of
communication. They are made objects in their own reality,
while they need to be subjects of their communication
processes. The traditional role division of those who
have knowledge and those who are supposed to have not
enough knowledge, should be demystified. Everybody knows
and is prepared to know more. Cultural values of daily life
experiences should be included in the communication processes.
Accessibility of the messages by rural women in the Third
World, should not only be defined in terms of access to,
but also control over their messages in both form and
content.

All social, cultural and political groups, including women
should equally participate in and benefit from the communication
processes which should produce and distribute information
for themselves. This alternative should be characterized by
forms and contents different from those of dominant
communication, using technologies differently and organising
themselves autonomously. Alternative communication should
not only produce a content but also images and symbols
which arise directly from daily life experiences of people,
including women. Then this will show a confrontation with
the dominant contents and forms. To achieve this, active
and effective participation of the public and their
organisations in communication production and distribution
is necessary. Alternative communication should never aim
at only a partial transformation of existing forms and
contents of dominant communication alone (for instance,
focussing on the use of female bodies in media, in order
to transform only this usage), but these activities should
take place within the struggle for transformation of

society as a whole. There must be created an infrastructure
for cooperation and exchange of information and experiences
between different (alternative communication) projects and
other social, cultural and political organisations in order
to maintain the relative autonomy of the projects in
organisational, political and financial terms.

In the next section I shall give some recommendations
particularly for governmental and non-governmental development
projects and programmes, for alternative communication
as part of the process leading to change the current
society.

- Governmental and non-governmental development projects
  and programmes should aim at policies directed towards
  alternative communication as described above and in the
  previous chapter. On one hand an infrastructure of
  information technology should be build up and on the other
  hand Third World countries should have policies to protect
  themselves agianst foreign control and domination. Use should
  be made as much as possible of available resources within
  Third World countries.

- An analysis should be made about the role of communications
  in development projects and programmes and its implications
  especially for women, with the aim to bring to the fore
  their own interests.

- An attempt should be made to analyse the difficulties in
  equal participation in and benefitting from communication
  processes in all fields at different levels. It should be
  explored how this can be changed.

- Research should be carried out to take stock off the
  experiments in alternative communication by men and
  women, at local and national levels and the possible
  space for such alternatives for the creation of the total
  alternative to the present society. Networking should be
  established between those alternatives, with the aim to

exchange experiences and information and to promote
solidarity between themselves.

- The :experiences in working with women through projects
and programmes needs to be documented and made accessible
to other people and organisations. Most organisations still
do have little experience with the implementations of
programmes on (men and) women and are hardly aware of the
iniatives and activities of other organisations at national
and international levels. Networks should be established
and developed in order to improve the qualilty of efforts
now being made, in general in isolation.

- An analysis should be made of the situation of women in
general, women's development programmes, women's informal
and formal organisations and feminist organisations in
order to assess the degree of involvement by women in the
international movement for women's liberation.

- Special emphasis should be given to rural development.
In many developing countries, the majority of the people
live in the rural areas. Rural areas should be integrated
in the process of development. Governments priority is
often not the rural poor, while they generally have the
least access to resources and services.

- Among the rural poor, women form the most disadvanteged
group. Within policies special effort should be made to
incorporate women into their development process. To this
end gender-aware approaches are necessary. As long as
policy makers are not aware of the unequal power relations
between men and women in favour of men, women's participation
in development will be limited.

- The guidline in communication and information projects
and programmes should be selfdetermination. People have
always coped with the system they live in and they tend

to loose this coping system due to manipulative new
influences.

- All governmental and non-governmental development
  projects and programmes should include communications
  in their programmes, in a way as described in chapter
  four. Within especially technical development programmes,
  communications is often not included.
  Programmes which are to the disadvantage of women should
  not be carried out.

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