ØRECOMM

– Consortium for Communication and Glocal Change

Concept Note

To a large degree, success in achieving the MDGs rests on participation and ownership. Communication is fundamental to helping people change the societies in which they live, particularly communication strategies which both inform and amplify voices of those with most at stake and which address the structural impediments to achieving these goals. However, such strategies remain a low priority on development agendas, undermining achievements of the MDGs.
Bellagio Statement on the Role of Communication in
Meeting the Millenium Development Goals, November 8-11 2004

Introduction and Justification

In the course of 2008, Roskilde University (RUC) and Malmö University (MAH) aim at establishing a bi-national consortium for the strengthening of research in the field of Communication for Development. ØRECOMM will focus on the relation between media, communication and social change processes at both global and local levels.

The consortium will have its academic base at both universities, MAH and RUC, and will work in close partnership and cooperation with the most important international players in the field of development cooperation: governmental and non-governmental organisations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, private enterprises with elaborate agendas of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and advocacy networks.

The *raison d'etre* of ØRECOMM lies firstly in achieving a deeper understanding of the nature and character of social innovation and change that occurs in the cross-section of communication processes, social entrepreneurship and organisational practice. The term glocal change refers to interconnectedness of change processes at different levels. G*local* development is not only a concern of the so-called developing countries. Globalization is rapidly making old categories and assumptions obsolete and the development organizations' emerging interest in media and communication goes hand in hand with a rethinking of the very concepts of development and social change. The entire world is in a process of transition and ØRECOMM explicitly recognizes and seeks to explore and understand the interconnectedness between change processes in the Øresund region – with its high influx of immigrants and changing cultural patterns - and in the world at large.

The reason for setting up this consortium specifically in the Øresund region is two-pronged. Firstly, the longstanding experience of RUC and MAH in the field of communication for development and

social change speaks for the geographical location. Secondly, Sweden and Denmark are central players in the field of development cooperation, with a long tradition as major bilateral donors (Sida and Danida), and as substantial contributors to the multilateral agencies and organizations. Linked to this, Copenhagen is the 6th largest UN-city in the world (measured in number of people working there) and many large NGOs have their base in the region. ØRECOMM maintains close collaborative links with many of these. Finally, considering the growing Scandinavian focus on corporate social responsibility, we will seek to develop new potential partnerships between ØRECOMM and the private sector in the region.

The aim of ØRECOMM is thus to develop a centre of excellence, integrating the comparative strengths of RUC, MAH and their international partners into a joint international Øresund based consortium which can contribute to qualifying the strategic communicative response to mayor development challenges of our time.

The rationale for setting up ØRECOMM at this time and moment parts from the understanding that the long-standing collaboration between MAH, RUC and their international partners within communication for development have conquered an international position, expertise and image which – if consolidated in the formal establishment of ØRECOMM - now stands a chance to solidly position ØRECOMM as one of the leading and most innovative 'nodes' in this field of research and action.

Mainstreaming Communication for Development, Empowerment and Social Change

Furthermore, the establishment of a bi-national research oriented Consortium in the Øresund region is tied strongly to the growing international focus on communication as a tool in processes of development and social change. As demonstrated by the first World Congress on Communication for Development (WCCD) in Rome 2006, many of the main organizations in this sector are in the process of making media and communication strategies integral parts of their practice and policy.

The research programme being proposed for ØRECOMM has its roots in a series of parallel developments that all speak to the relevance of a more focused research agenda which can help qualify and improve the use of communication as a tool to articulate development, social innovation and change processes at all levels.

Communication for development has over the past years experienced a substantial growth as a strategic tool in a growing number of development sectors. Despite the somewhat negative assessment of the state of affairs expressed in the Bellagio-quote initiating this concept note, we can today see a recent and growing emphasis upon the role of communication in the practice of development cooperation. It has been a tool in the development practice since the beginning of development cooperation, but it's only in very recent years that is has gained the prominence we see today.

This consolidation of communication for development as a core tool in development cooperation is partially due to technological developments and the increasingly mediatised society of the modern world, requiring insights and use of these forms of communication and mediated platforms of

participation in development. It is thus in part connected to the gradual development of media platforms in developing countries and to their role for ordinary people and civil society to access the public debate and voice their concerns. The old NWICO debate of the 1970s and '80s has been revitalized due to the deregulation and liberalization of the media in many developing nations, allowing a renewed focus on information and communication rights. Consequently, there is a direct connection between the concern for media development in these countries on one hand and the development of policies and practices around the strategic use of communication as a tool to articulate social innovation and change processes on the other.

Furthermore, we are currently experiencing a mainstreaming of communication policies, tools and practices into a growing number of bilateral and multilateral organisations as well as into NGOs – it's a mainstreaming which can be seen in a multitude of ways:

- The largest ComDev portal in the world, The Communication Initiative, has today 75.000+ subscribers to their newsletters worldwide, of which less that 10.000 are academics, the rest are communication practitioners engaged in communication for development practices (www.comminit.com);
- The World Bank opened their Development Communication Office in 2004 and was one of the driving forces behind the 1st World Congress on Communication for Development in Rome in 2006. It gathered almost 1000 communication for development practitioners and academics. In late 2007 the World Bank furthermore opened an office for Communication and Governance (CommGAP);
- UNDP is currently piloting in 6 African and Asian countries a 'communication for empowerment' (CfE) methodology developed by the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre. CfE is seen by UNDP as a strategic way of developing bottom up policies;
- The last many years of using campaigns in the fight against HIV/AIDS has resulted in a growing institutionalization of communication into the work of the governments, UN-agencies, bilateral agencies, NGOs and CBOs. This has *de facto* paved the way for the use of communication in other sectors of development.

A series of new development challenges are now becoming growing fields of action where communication for development, empowerment and social change has a role to play: The growing focus upon climate change and sustainable development is rapidly becoming a massive area of action, but still with scarce research being conducted. Equally incipient is peace communication (which is the use of communication and media in preventing and mitigating conflicts) as well as 'human security communication' which on one hand is a cross-sectoral area and on the other hand is connected particularly to the discourse around 'war against terrorism' and the socially and culturally polarising processes articulated by that discourse.

Conclusively, the trend is very clear: 'Communication for Development' has become a strategic tool in a growing number of development sectors (World Bank, 2007; Loewenberg and Bonde 2007; Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte 2006; Hemer and Tufte 2005).

Strongest in the current re-assessment of using communication strategically in articulating development is the increased focus on how communication can become a strong tool in enhancing social change processes. Consequently, ØRECOMM will seek to develop a stronger connection between the research in communication for development and social change with research and practice on social entrepreneurship and social innovation.

Ørecomm Research Focus

The growing attention to issues of good governance has come to be one of the most significant innovations in recent development thinking (Gaventa 2006, Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Kabeer 2005). However, noteworthy in this development has been a rather limited focus on the role which communication potentially can play in enhancing processes of good governance and accountability.

A process of convergence seems to be gradually underway, a convergence process where the emerging paradigm of communication for social change very obviously is dealing with issues of accountability, transparency and citizen's rights in governance processes (Wilkins 2000). At the same time, institutions engaged in work related to good governance are grappling with how to incorporate the media as well as communication more broadly speaking into good governance projects – beyond the traditional support of freedom of expression and free and independent media as has been seen for decades (UNDP/OGC 2006; Panos 2006; Servaes et al, 2007).

Some of these 'next-generation-questions' regarding the relationship between communication, media development, good governance and a series of development challenges is what is contributing to set the research agenda for Ørecomm.

Given the *common thematic platforms* of academic expertise at MAH and RUC, Ørecomm will focus on developing a research programme which in the course of the first 3-year period will develop into 5 specific research strands:

1. **Media and Conflict.** In regard to the role of media and communication vis-à-vis human security and conflict, the questions to be formulated deal with the role media and communication play in instigating conflict, on the one hand – as in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, to take the most well-known recent examples – and, on the other, how media and communication can be used strategically to prevent conflict or to serve as a peacebroker and peacebuilder during and after conflict or war. Institutionally, research into media and conflict and human security has strong bases of expertise at both MAH (Global Political Studies, International Migration and Ethnic Relations) and RUC (CBIT). Furthermore, Ørecomm is a founding member of the 'Bonn Network on Media in Conflict and Peacebuilding' which was established at European level in the aftermath of the Bonn conference on the same issue, hosted by Deutche Welle in April 2007 (Loewenberg and Bonde 2007).

2. **Health and Environment**. The challenges of public health have for many years been the single most important sector within Communication for Development. Since the early nutrition campaigns of the 1960s in Africa health communication has existed as a field of communication practice. It has passed through a broad variety of public health foci (family planning, polio eradication, tb, sexual and reproductive health and rights. At Ørecomm the research will be based on a broad understanding of health as determined by the Ottowa Charter (1986) which emphasized the social determinants of health. In the past 15 years health communication has been severely challenged by the proliferating HIV/AIDS pandemic. A complex pandemic as HIV/AIDS demanded equally complex communication

responses in the campaigns designed. However this move from narrow marketing of messages in many social marketing campaigns to complex communication for social change oriented campaigns has been very slow in gaining impetus. It is from the last decade of critical reflection within HIV/AIDS communication for prevention that the emerging paradigm of communication for social change has evolved. ØRECOMM researchers are actively involved in research, policy development and practice of HIV/AIDS communication and have been actively involved in the international debate on HIV/AIDS communication. This is thus already a well-established research strand in ØRECOMM.

3. **Diaspora, Migration and Transnational Flows**. In the development cooperation, there is a strong lag behind with regard to understanding and responding to the increased global interconnectedness which the internet and related technologies has made possible. Migrants, be they economic, conflict-driven or voluntary, are social innovators when it comes to developing new lifestyles and forms of establishing social networks and using communication for those purposes. Diasporic communities today live much more in transnational social networks with their countries of origin. However, the role of the new media and transnational communication flows and interconnectivities in everyday life is far from understood or for that matter contemplated within development cooperation. Furthermore, the role of the internet for civil society's and people's participation in decision-making and in voicing their opinion is not well researched. These research areas speak to some of the core disciplines within the Communication departments - Arts and Communication (K3) at MAH and Communication, Business and Information Technologies (CBIT) at RUC. It also strongly connects to International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER) at MAH and Culture and Identity (CUID) and Society and Globalization (ISG) at RUC. Moreover, it is an area where we have strong connections to other research networks, for example CULCOM, Cultural Complexity in the New Norway. Its research director, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, has been a regular guest lecturer on the ComDev master at MAH, and is a member of the recently established international reference group for Communication for Development.

4. **Citizenship, Governance and Public Sphere**. In recent years bilateral collaboration with developing countries has moved into budget support, limiting the donor's influence on how money is being spent in the partner countries. Parallel to this decrease in donor influence, a growing focus on issues of governance and accountability has been seen. DFID, SIDA, Danida, Irish Aid and many other bilateral agencies today have governance policies in place. Media and communication play some role in these policies and practices, but with room for expansion: Support to independent media have for many years been seen as one way of securing an in-country watch-dog function, and long-standing support to media development, journalism training, media policy frameworks, etc has been widespread, not least with strong Nordic support. More recently, the role of communication in governance has grown. UNDP's work with 'communication for empowerment' has been a manner whereby to develop 'listening strategies' so that development agencies like UN-agencies, NGOs and government institutions involved in developing i.e. poverty reduction strategies, better could base their policy development work on the needs, voices and concerns of the people. Communication for empowerment, community consultations, Sida's own listeners studies currently being piloted in Bangladesh, are all communication strategies in support of good governance and better mechanisms of holding governments accountable. Both RUC and MAH can offer a substantial knowledge base for the development of this research

strand: Public Administration and International Development Studies at RUC (ISG) and Global Political Studies at MAH.

5. **Cultural and Media Production.** Fundamental in most strategic use of communication should be a concern for all dimensions of the communication strategy – both its form, content and its impact upon audiences and societies. However, a lot of communication for development practice is very narrowly focused on dissemination of key messages rather than engaging in participatory strategy and content development, cultural sensitivity and in-depth studies of outcomes and impact. Likewise is the dominant tradition within a lot of communication for development to focus on effect studies rather than exploring the sense-making processes and analyse not only the psychological but also the social and cultural change processes articulated by the interventions. Both RUC and MAH can offer innovative complementary approaches to analysing and understanding the media and communication strategies applied in development cooperation and contribute to increasingly improving the communication for development practices in development cooperation. RUC and MAH can also via ØRECOMM contribute to another dimension of media and cultural production within development cooperation. It is the case within support to art and culture, including cultural heritage and museum support. These are increasingly important sectors within development cooperation, and have a strong base at both MAH (Cultural Production) and RUC (Performance-Design).

ØRECOMM **Work Plan 2008-2010**

In order to pursue and consolidate the ØRECOMM Consortium agenda, a multiple strategy with three main objectives, is planned:

> **Objective 1. Consolidate *a joint research platform* in the Øresund region.**
> **Objevtive 2. Develop *action research projects*,** engaging actively with regional, national and international organisations.
> **Objetive 3. Further strengthen international partnerships and research networks**

Joint Research Platform
The research platform will be grounded in MAH's and RUC's thematic areas of expertise and comparative advantage. For example RUC has a longstanding expertise on international development studies, as well as health and environment research, while MAH has longstanding expertise on cultural production, new media and cultural encounters. The crucial common denominator lies in ØRECOMM's focus on strategic communication as a central response to any given development challenge.
Developing a joint research platform will require a combined strategy of including a staff of permanent researchers as well as post-docs and Ph.Ds. To reinforce this staff-basis, a strong alumni network is under development. Already, the alumni network is gaining a growing importance as a platform which will connect ØRECOMM solidly to mayor players in the development business. This is evident by having alumni working in many of the key organisations active in the 'development business' (UN agencies, NGOs, governments, universities).

Action Research Projects

Action research collaborations will connect ØRECOMM's research expertise to very concrete development challenges. Relevant action research projects already exist at RUC/MAH with a number of NGOs, UN agencies and bilateral and multilateral agencies, including: FEMINA HIP, Tanzania; Oslo Governance Center, ADRA Malawi, UNICEF Angola, National AIDS Council Mozambique and World Bank's office for Development Communication, Washington.

International Partnerships and Research Networks
Building on ØRECOMM's *large international **network** of collaborating partners* as well as strengthening our network within our own institutions, ØRECOMM has an excellent opportunity to position itself centrally in the international field of communication for development. Collaborative research partnerships already include:

- The *Communication for Social Change and Development University Network* was formed in September 2005. It consists of (at present 15) universities with programmes in Communication for Development. MAH and RUC are among the founding members. Sponsored by the Communication for Social Change Consortium.
- The *Nordic Network on Media and Popular Culture in Africa* was established in 2005 with Thomas Tufte as one of the coordinators, and MAH an active member; Sponsored by the Nordic Africa Institute.
- The international research network *New Thinking on Citizenship, Authority, and Public Space in Latin America* has recently been established, with Thomas Tufte and Oscar Hemer as founding members. Sponsored by The Danish Research Council for Social Sciences.
- The '*Bonn Network on Media in Conflict and Peacebuilding*' with Thomas Tufte as founding member. Collaborating partners: Deutche Welle & EU.

Internally, at RUC and MAH key departments will have participating researchers in ØRECOMM. At MAH ØRECOMM is rooted at K3 (Arts and Communication) and will also be connected staff- and theme-wise with other institutions in the new Culture and Society department (IMER, Global Political Studies, Urban Studies) as well as the Health and Society department. At RUC, ØRECOMM is rooted at CBIT (Communication, Business and Information Technologies) but will furthermore be connected to the Dept of Society and Globalisation (ISG) and 'ENSPAC' (Environment, Social and Spatial Change):

Programme Activities 2008-2010

The programme activities are planned to focus on two activity areas: ***institutional development*** and ***research***.

Institutional Development

Institutional development includes two main strands: firstly, an internal strengthening of the Øresund regional platform, the centre of ØRECOMM being RUC and MAH; secondly, developing institutional partnerships in developing countries with the explicit aim to host joint research projects and develop the national research capacity in the countries we focus on. The first institutional partnerships has recently been established University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and a broader institutional partnership in being developed in the region of East and Southern Africa.

At RUC/MAH we aim at developing a joint Ph.D program with Ph.D courses, and joint research oriented activities, such as an international conference and thematized international workshops. Furthermore, the existing web-based MAH journal *Glocal Times* will be closely affiliated to ØRECOMM as well as complemented with a biannual ØRECOMM yearbook. Finally, collaborative efforts around teaching will be further developed: curricular development and teaching courses jointly.

At PhD level we will develop a specialized focus within the Danish school of PhD research in Media and Communication and corresponding Swedish organization (at present a collaboration between Malmö and Karlstad Universities). ØRECOMM aims at offering joint international PhD courses/modules in Communication for Development (as part of larger PhD programmes) and to secure funding for new PhD students with specific foci within our research programme.

MA level: Curriculum development and coordination. Joint courses and modules will be developed in the respective master programmes, as well as single subject courses within the five areas outlined above.

Research

The key research activity is to promote and conduct collaborative research within the five areas of the ØRECOMM research programme. By the end of this first work plan period (2008-2011) ØRECOMM will have developed research activities in all 5 research programmes. This entails the involvement of permanent staff at RUC and MAH as well as guest professors, Ph.Ds, post-docs and other temporary research staff affiliated to the ØRECOMM research programme.

The complementary research activities will include:

A bi-annual research conference, followed by a peer-reviewed publication of the most important contributions. The conferences will one time take place in a partner institution in a developing country and the next time in the Øresund region. The first conference is planned to be held in Dar es Salaam in November 2009. A pre-seminar at the IAMCR World Congress in Stockholm in July

2008, gathering some 6-800 of the worlds communication scholars. The pre-seminar is intended to be the official launching of the consortium.

A yearly internationally renowned guest professor will visit RUC and MAH, spending two months in the region. The first guest professor is planned for spring 2009.

International research projects. Currently (2007-2009) *Oscar Hemer* has a project on Fiction's Truth and Social Change (a comparative study of South Africa and Latin America). *Thomas Tufte* is working on HIV/AIDS communication and prevention in Southern Africa. *Rikke Andreassen* is currently engaged in a three-year EU-financed research project, VEIL – Values, Equality and Differences in Liberal Democracy (www.veil-project.eu) – with the task of presenting an action plan to the EU Commission. *Anders Høg Hansen* is working on media and conflict resolution, with particular focus on the Middle East. Participating Ph.D-students: Denmark/RUC: *Rikke Frank Jørgensen* with a project on internet, governance and public sphere, and *Dora Navarro* with a project on community radio, participation and development in Peru; Sweden/MAH: *Zeenaath Hasan* with a project on internet and democracy.

Collaborative action research with international and national NGOs aiming at improving their communication performance. Thomas Tufte is currently working with ADRA Malawi, Danchurchaid in the Middle East and FEMINA HIP in Tanzania.

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