

## Letter from ØRECOMM co-directors Oscar Hemer and Thomas Tufte:

### 2011 communicated for social change worldwide!

A little over a year ago, who would have thought so much would change in 2011? Revolutions and massive social mobilizations across the globe – from the already iconic ‘Arab Spring’ to civil unrest and strikes in Malawi, massive student protests in Chile, a Europe in profound crisis from Greece, UK and Italy to the *indignados* of Spain. 2011 culminated with the widespread Occupy Wall Street demonstrations in the US and the beginning mobilization around Putin’s possible reelection for president in Russia in 2012.

The much discussed role of social media in many of these mobilizations has sparked a historical attention to communication for social change in the spheres of media and communication scholars. Which current conferences or new calls for publications are *not* about voice and participation, mobilization and rights, citizenship and change? Communication for social change as a terrain of practice and as a cross-disciplinary field of scholarship and research is at the verge of drowning in success! In this environment, our field of communication for development and social change has proliferated, becoming increasingly institutionalized, and the participants in ØRECOMM have done a pretty good job of moving along and taking up the challenges.

ØRECOMM has in 2011 been active both in collaborating around the institutionalization of communication for development programs worldwide, in initiating and participating in new publications in the field, in having PhD-students take up a series of the emerging research challenges and lastly, ØRECOMM has in 2011 hosted a long range of seminars, guest lectures and most importantly, the 5-day ØRECOMM festival in September 2011.

### Institutionalizations and Collaborations

2011 has been a year of strong global institutionalization of courses in media and communication for development and social change. In Latin America, particularly Paraguay and Colombia have moved far; Colombia now with 4 MAs in communication for development and social change, and Paraguay opened it’s first MA in communication for development in 2011 – in addition to having 4 BA programs exclusively focused on ComDev – in a small country of 5.5 mio inhabitants in the heart of South America! Paraguay also moved forward on a regional ComDev agenda by spearheading and hosting the launch of the ILCD - ‘Instituto Latinoamericano de Comunicación para el Desarrollo’ (The Latin American Institute for ComDev), a new research & practice oriented NGO with regional aspirations – launched in Asunción in November 2011.

A new and slightly different take on ComDev is emerging within health communication internationally, actively supported by the very large C-Change health communication program run by the North American NGO ‘FHI Development 360’. This is emerging as Masters programs in ‘social and behavior change communication’ (SBCC), so far in South Africa, Nigeria, Albania and Guatemala. In the Arab World an incipient teaching initiative is emerging at the Northwestern University in Qatar, within the area of alternative media.

In Europe, the British hub around London, but also Sussex and Norwich has developed a series of new MAs in media and development (Westminster, SOAS, LSE, East Anglia and Sussex); in Spain we see courses at universities in Madrid, Salamanca, Sevilla, Barcelona, Cádiz, Malaga and most recently, a networking initiative between European and Latin American universities has materialized (called REAL\_CODE = The European-Latin American Network on Communication for Development), spearheaded by the University of

Santiago de Compostella. In Rome the Gregorian University has completed its third successful ComDev online course in Spanish, with a broad participation of Latin American and some European students.

In many of these initiatives, ØRECOMM is collaborating – as teachers on courses, as partners in networks and applications, as speakers and as members of advisory boards. Among the most important initiatives for ØRECOMM was our strong involvement from the outset in the REAL\_CODE initiative, in the launch of ILCD in Paraguay and in the developments of ComDev in Albania. In Albania Thomas Tufte taught with Rafael Obregon on a 10 day trainer of trainers in February. In March we hosted a visit of 7 scholars from Albania to our Øresunds region and in November a group of 5-6 ØRECOMM members travelled to Tirana in November on a ComDev seminar co-organized by ØRECOMM, the Malmö ComDev masters and University of Tirana. This collaboration continues in 2012.

The hosting in 2011 of Ana Fernandez and Victor Saez, guest scholars from Barcelona and Cádiz, adds to our 'Spanish connection', while our ongoing collaborations with the British environments is gaining a new impetus in 2012, where we've already had Robin Mansell from LSE and Winston Mano from Westminster University visiting us in January 2012 and where Malmö's ComDev course in March will be relocating to Westminster. From Kenya, Grace Githaiga came and spent a total of 2 months with us at RUC, as part of her participation in our MEDleA project.

Our funding for Glocal NOMAD (Network on Media and Development) ended by the end of 2011, concluding two very dynamic years of collaboration with the Glocal Media Studies group at Århus University in Denmark – Teke Ngomba, Jakob Thorsen and Poul Erik Nielsen. While the two years focused mainly on joint seminar activity, we will now produce a book together (planned for 2012), and we are additionally working on several research funding applications together.

2012 is starting very promising with new international collaborations emerging for ØRECOMM. Oscar Hemer and Kathrine Winkelhorn have received a grant to develop an Indian collaboration in a new phase of their '*Memories of Modernity Project*' (the first phase being with University of KwaZulu Natal in 2007-2009). Anders Høg Hansen and Ylva Ekström have equally been successful in receiving a grant to develop a research project with the House of Cultures in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Thomas Tufte and Norbert Wildermuth have similarly been successful in two applications resulting in a collaboration with 3 Brazilian universities in 2012 around the topic of '*Media, Citizen and Government Relations*' and a collaboration with universities of Bhutan and the registration of Devi Bhakta Suberi from Bhutan as PhD-student at RUC. The topic here is ICT and good governance. A number of other applications have been submitted to strengthen our Nordic collaboration and strengthen teaching collaboration with Albania and REAL\_CODE.

Altogether, the above developments speak to an institutionalization of the field as well as a rapid development of the ComDev community at a global level. ØRECOMM is happy to be actively and centrally involved. While institutionalization is now happening worldwide we must be more cautious than ever to ensure that we contemplate the development challenges of real life; activism and broad social mobilisation, new media developments, financial crisis and political changes. These developments are more than ever challenging us to re-invent ourselves, re-think our core research questions and develop new research agendas that reflect the world around us and help us understand, critique and engage in these development challenges.

## RESEARCH

ØRECOMM's research agenda is broad, and also very global. Common denominators lie in ØRECOMM's interest in questions of changing media environments and civic cultures, forms of and opportunities for engagement and participation in social change processes at multiple levels, storytelling and social change, and new media platforms and their roles in governance processes.

The challenges around the Arab Spring, for example, are reflected in two of our PhD-students' work – Rikke Hostrup Haugbølle works on media developments in Tunisia, and has in the past year been very active in commenting and analyzing the Tunisian revolution in Danish media to the Danish public – she has already published widely in journals and articles. Newly started PhD student Nina Grønlykke is our first co-financed PhD, with the INGO 'International Media Support' co-sponsoring. Nina is exploring the relations between social media activists and media professionals in Cairo, Egypt.

Finally, we have begun 2012 by saying goodbye to Rikke Frank Jørgensen who in January 2012 defended her PhD entitled '*Framing the Net – how discourse shapes law and culture*', with case studies from German Wikipedia and the Ugandan NGO Wougnnet's use of the internet. On the day of her defense, 27 January, Rikke had a very interesting article in the Danish daily *Politiken* reflecting upon the new legal initiatives in the US: SOPA, PIPA and ACTA.

Kristoffer Gansing's dissertation has been delayed, due to his current position as the successful director of *Transmediale* in Berlin, one of the most important festivals for digital art and culture. But it is scheduled to happen this year. Zeenath Hasan became a mother in 2011 and is combining the finalizing of her PhD project with parenting her son.

Thomas Tufte and Norbert Wildermuth's research project 'People Speaking Back? Media, Empowerment and Democracy in East Africa' ([MEDieA](#)) had evolved slowly but continually in the past year, with fieldwork being conducted in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam; Datus Rweyemamu, our senior research partner in Tanzania, has for example conducted a survey with 800 youth in the low income neighbourhood of Temeke in Dar es Salaam, exploring how they engage with media, health issues and with the political system. Findings will be presented at IAMCR 2012. Rose, our Tanzania PhD-student, is getting ready to conduct fieldwork, while Grace, our Kenyan PhD-student is already busy with hers – both being media ethnographies is young low income East African women's use of media and ICTs.

All in all, ØRECOMM is actively responding to the challenges of our times by constantly formulating and pursuing research questions that tie in with the development challenges of our times.

## PUBLICATIONS

Publicationwise, ØRECOMM's participants continue to be very active – in 2011 having published in a large number of anthologies, in many international peer reviewed journals, and also producing books of their own. At the IAMCR conference in Istanbul Thomas Tufte launched the book he co-edited with Brazilian Cilia Peruzzo and Colombian Jair Vega; (*Tracks of An Other Communication in Latin America. Community Practices, Theories and Social Demands*), a book in Spanish and Portuguese, available [full-text online](#).

Oscar Hemer's doctoral dissertation, '*Writing Transition – Fiction and Truth in South Africa and Argentina*' - which he defended at University of Oslo in September, is just about to be published in a slightly revised version as '*Fiction and Truth in Transition : Writing the present past in South Africa and Argentina*'

(Lit Verlag) .Also completed in 2011 and forthcoming in 2012 is a special issue of *Glocal Times* in collaboration with *Nordicom Review*, co-edited by *Glocal Times* editor Florencia Enghel with Karin Wilkins from University of Austin Texas – they assemble an excellent group of leading international scholars in the field of communication for development, including ØRECOMM scholars Ylva Ekström and Anders Høg Hansen, and Lisa Richey. Just recently, Anders Høg Hansen published the book *'Bob Dylan 1961-1967. Kærlighed, krig og historie'* (Bob Dylan 1961-1967. Love, war and history) with Frydenlund Publishers in Denmark.

Finally, a number of larger book projects with strong ØRECOMM participation are underway. With *Nordicom*, Anne Sofie Hansen Skovmoes, Winnie Mitullah, Thomas Tufte and Norbert Wildermuth will in 2012 be publishing the book *'Media, Empowerment and Social Change in Africa'* bringing together a few established researchers plus a whole new generation of young African and Nordic scholars that have conducted research in this topic in African countries. Also, Karin Wilkins, Thomas Tufte and Rafael Obregon have signed a contract with Blackwell Wiley to edit a 30 chapter book in the *IAMCR Global Media Handbook Series* – it will be on *Development Communication & Social Change*, bringing together both development critical as well as social activist and more institutional perspectives on media and communication, with a very strong group of leading international scholars contributing. Finally, a publication is emerging from the practitioner day at the 2011 ØRECOMM Festival – focusing on the role of social media in development cooperation. Ricky Braskov from ØRECOMM has edited the 70 page publication, with contributions by representatives from SPIDER (Paula Uimonen), UNDP (Stine Junge), IMS (Petter Åttingsberg), UNICEF (Rafael Obregon) and EMPOWERHOUSE (Birgitte Jallo), in addition to an introductory article by Ricky himself setting the scene. This publication will be produced by ØRECOMM and available online by April 2012.

### ØRECOMM Festival

To conclude, let us mention the largest undertaking by ØRECOMM to date – organizing the festival *'Agency in the Mediatized World – Media, Communication and Development in Transition'*. This 5 day event took place between 9-13 September 2011, beginning at Malmö University, moving over to University of Copenhagen and ending at Roskilde University, bringing together an average of 200 participants (of which 100 were online) every day, students, practitioners, researchers and artists. Participants from more than 20 countries were present in the Øresund region for the event and about 50 people gave lectures, showed their films, participated in panel debates, made expositions, led street walks, and in other ways performed and engaged the festival participants in ComDev dialogue . Many different perspectives on the festival theme were discussed and the event marked a turning point in ØRECOMM's aim to engage broad constituencies, locally as well as globally, in debates about the challenging questions of our time. Therefore, keep an eye open for more information about this year's ØRECOMM Festival, scheduled for 14-17 September 2012 and targeting the topic of *'Reclaiming the Public Sphere – communication, power and social change'*.

Oscar Hemer and Thomas Tufte

ØRECOMM Co-directors

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