Communication for Development is also a way of life

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With some element of introspection, I can disclose that communication for development has not only played a big role, but it has also been a big part of my immigrant life in Sweden. Half of my eleven years in this country have been spent engaging both in the academic study and pragmatic applications of communication for development to varying degrees.

It was in 2010 when I learned about Malmö University's Master's degree program, and I remember experiencing a sense of familiarity as I read through the program description. Since I had done a lot of communication for development and social change in my hometown, mostly through social activism, I knew that it was right and fitting to complement these experiences with academic qualifications, so I applied for the program. After several readings of the course literature and related articles, I realized that the concept of development communication has its roots in the rural areas of my homeland, making it more apparent to me that the Philippines has a long tradition of practicing community-based development initiatives. My immigrant profile would be the immediate and explicit resource and topic for my Master's thesis, in which I ventured out to understand the growing community of young Filipino women who came to Denmark for cultural exchange as au pairs, looking into the transnational practices (Vertovec & Cohen, 1999) of the group as well as how they performed citizenship (Dahlgren, 2000, 2009). In the process, I found out about the cultural[2] frictions (Hofstede in Gudykunst & Kim, 2003) that confronted the Filipino au pairs with the host families, and learnt how these young, temporary migrants made use of the mass and interactive media (Dahlgren, 2000) for networking as well as for their self-improvement and knowledge acquisition. My Master's thesis allowed me to meet, know and, to a certain extent, be part of the Filipino community in Denmark. Being part of the Filipino community enabled me to contribute my knowledge about the au pair system that eventually led to my participation in the Nordic Forum 2014 in collaboration with the network of Filipino women, Babaylan Denmark[3]. The Nordic Forum experience has provided me further insight on the challenges that women in the Nordic region face as well as the achievements of individuals and civil society organisations that advocate for more inclusive actions on women's rights.

2014 was also the year when I started my Doctoral studies in Communication for Development, thereupon becoming the first Ph.D. Candidate since the Master's program started in 2000. I am, in several ways, continuously looking into the transnational practices of the migrant Filipinos (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc, 1994; Bauböck & Faist, 2010). This time, I focus on the collaborative efforts between the Filipino civil society and its web-based radio network across Europe. Primarily, I am exploring how collaborations are forged for the benefit of the Filipino community in the Nordic region and in Spain; how the creation of radio programs by novice broadcasters can open up channels or spheres of communication and participation among the prolific community; and its possible development and social change links to the Philippines. My interests in these two European areas are tied to the cultural specifics of the Nordic countries in contrast with those of Spain. I take on the importance of culture in development (Appadurai, 2013), considering how it can be a starting point for participation. By studying the notion of participation through radio broadcasting -or

more specifically radio streaming, since it is a web-radio- I am interested in investigating how such form of mundane citizenship (Bakardjieva, 2012) not only capacitates novice broadcasters but also motivates the audience to explore the expanse of new media technology- that the Internet offers more than social networking. The logic is connected to the study conducted by Labucay between 2011-2014[4], wherein it showed that Filipinos are mostly inclined to use the Internet for social networking, while seeking information/learning takes the second place. Although the study had its focus on the Internet behaviour of the Filipinos in relation to the digital divide in the Philippines, it would be of relevance to know if the same actuality could be identified among the Filipino migrant communities in Europe. If this is the case, it does not necessarily mean that it is unfavourable as it only reflects that Filipino immigrants reconnect with their families using social media platforms. What would be interesting to know is if they go beyond these platforms and look for information- if they know that there are available channels for them, and in this case, if they are aware that there is a radio chain that they can listen to.

The Filipino community living in Europe has an extensive radio network since 2009. Originated in London, the radio was envisioned by a Filipino immigrant who had been a professional broadcaster in the Philippines. The radio network's goal is to establish local radio stations across Europe to highlight and specialize on the needs of the Filipino diaspora. For example, the Nordic region has its own distinct programs that feature real life stories of the Filipinos from the community established in the five Nordic countries. Since this is a web-radio, the audience from the Nordic countries and beyond can listen to the stories, discussions, and entertainment provided by the broadcasters. From my personal experience as one of the Nordic region's broadcasters[5], I have learned that there is, to a great extent, an appreciation and need from the audience to listen to programming that they can relate to, as validation or as an example that they are not alone in their situation. The personal stories become instruments for aspirations as allowing the guests share their own personal experiences with the audience generates solidarity and tenacity. By listening to the stories, the audience can be empowered through: understanding that there is also another person who has similar issues, hence one becomes part of a discussion/debate- (re)claiming one's voice; and cultural identification as individuals become part of a group.

I see the importance of my doctoral degree project in terms of providing an understanding of: (1) how users, that is, both the radio practitioners and the audience, make use of technological innovations that, in theory, could give them capacity and influence; (2) identifying the challenges in communication for development in migrant communities; (3) examining how immigrant women can enact a strong agency and how they create and affect social relations; (4) explaining how culture matters in development from a transnational perspective. These four interconnected aspects of my research have direct links to communication for development, specifically, on the role of the users and uses of radio streaming. I argue for the importance of taking into consideration the challenges in communication for development for the reason that they do exist. We need information on why, how, in which terms communication for development is disrupted or impeded. For instance, does the diffusion of communication platforms have an effect on communication for development in migrant communities, how and in which ways?

It is equally important to explore the challenges that confront communication for development, so that we, the researchers, can understand the changing patterns of the media

use and users and continuously design approaches that will address these evolving patterns. On that note, I would like to mention the recent study on the users across media deliberating, for example, the futures of communication and media studies that highlight the significant position of the audience in the debate. According to the scholars who conducted the study, researchers have the responsibility to have better connection and relationship with other stakeholders so as to ensure that there is an opportunity for dialogue, which in turn creates trust. In communication for development, this is almost a clear research element, however, is this always guaranteed? How do we safeguard that participation happens as it should? In this regard, the study pointed out, that mixed methods should be thought out to uncover the different perspectives of the audience.

Since I focus on migrant communities' radio practices, it is imperative that I consider the notion of participation according to their own understanding, consequently steering away from researcher imposed participation. Moreover, I acknowledge that specializing in communication for development entails examining the communication for development periphery and its links to other fields that could be vital in C4D research, and this is why I believe that there is a good connection between communication for development and migration studies. As an immigrant, I see communication for development as a way of life; mostly because the practical, academic skills and knowledge that I have gained have put me in the position to be cognizant of the environment I live in, and of how I can find and make use of the means to advocate for change.

Since this submission is for the anniversary edition of the Glocal Times, I am thankful that I am able to share my current research to the readers of the journal. Following my first contribution to Glocal Times in 2013, several undergraduate and graduate students in Asia contacted me. Based on that experience, I see the value of this open journal for junior researchers who want to publish their research, as well as a venue for finding and easily accessing communication for development cases and inquiries.

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[2] See the cultural dimensions on Hofstede's website.
[3] See more on my position on the au pair issue at http://www.skanesfria.se/artikel/114661.
[4] See Labucay's Patterns of Internet Usage in the Philippines survey and report in James, J. (ed.) (2014).
[5] I became a program host for the Nordic region when I approached the station manager about my research. I was offered to lead a weekly show on the lives of the Filipino women who are married to the locals. I eventually invited a co-host from Denmark as per the radio station manager's advice.