Communication and the capability approach

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The knowledge society raises new challenges for human development due to the change brought about by the new forms in which people communicate, participate and distribute information. The present research analyzes the role of communication in the elimination of the deprivations that limit people's liberty to obtain what they value in life; its relation to the fundamental pillars of the capability approach –equity, efficiency, empowerment, and liberty-; its dimension as a capability and its role in individual and collective empowerment. It also argues that communication is an intangible asset that makes the use of collective resources more efficient, improves equity and promotes the agency capability. Therefore, there is a two-way link between communication and each of the components of human development, as well as a direct link between communication and human development itself. Communication is agency, it is empowerment and it is participation.

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1. Human Development is not possible without communication: introduction to the study of communication in the capability approach

Human development is not possible without communication because the latter engages all sectors of society in a participative manner.. "Communication is a fundamental social process, a basic human necessity and the basis of all social organization"[2].

The etymology of the word "communication" takes us to the Latin term "comunis" which means "common". Hence that, to communicate, means to transmit ideas and thoughts with the objective of making "common" with others. Through history, from all the theoretical positions, it has been stated that communication plays a fundamental role in the construction of identities, as a constantly changing process, and in the conformation of socio-cultural relations.

Human beings cannot fulfill ourselves in isolation. From the moment we are born we live in association with a group in which we develop our capabilities, which strengthens the thesis that capabilities (understanding "capabilities" in the sense that Amartya Sen has used the term, which will be developed later) are carried individually but constructed socially. Communication constitutes a fundamental dimension of human existence. It could be said that all our activities need communication for their development, both communication to others as well as intrapersonal communication through thought.

Jürgen Habermas developed a universal theory of society through the theory of communicative action. He calls for the reconstruction "through individual's expressions, of language and the communication of a space of understanding and consensus, of acceptance and cooperation, as the basis for a new social pact". Habermas argues that language is the basis for democracy because it allows for efficient, balanced and free communication and interaction[3].

After Habermas, there has been and continues to be a great deal of theoretical debate regarding communication. Communication has been utilized and instrumentalized in the various different paradigms of development. No matter how development is understood, communication has

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[2] Final declaration of the World Summit of Information Society (2004)
[3] Based on information available in Infoamérica, "Comunicación, sociedad y cultura", entered by Jürgen Haberlas. [http://www.infoamerica.org/teoria/habermas2.htm]

played a part in its understanding. Each conception of development includes a theory and practice of communication.

We therefore consider of a special interest the exploration of the role of communication in human development understood as freedom, i.e., as the process of expansion of human opportunities and choices for people to be and do what they consider valuable. The goal is to analyze de role of communication in the elimination of the deprivations that limit people's freedom to achieve that which they consider valuable in life; its relationship to the keystones of the capability approach -equity, efficiency, empowerment and freedom-; its role as a human capability in itself; and its role in individual and collective empowerment. We consider these analyses more relevant than ever insofar as we are currently immersed in the knowledge society in which people communicate, participate and disseminate information.

Communication is an intangible asset that makes the use of collective resources more efficient improves equity and promotes agency. It therefore has a bidirectional relationship with each of the keystones of human development but also a direct relationship with human development itself. Communication is agency, it is empowerment, and it is participation.

To analyze the capability approach from a communication standpoint one must address elements and realities that are more relevant today than ever (blogs, mobile phones, the new roles of traditional media, dialogue, cultural freedom, freedom of expression, new technologies of information and communication, etc.), since they are the basis for the new knowledge society. Moreover, we are witnessing great changes in the ways in which people communicate and distribute information. Also, one of the main challenges for the Human Development Index lies in the measurement of empowerment and political and cultural freedom. In the face of such a challenge it might be of great use to evaluate people's communication rights (for example, freedom of speech, access to the media, property of the media, etc. [4]) as a way of measuring agency, empowerment and political freedom. Such an approach would be less controversial from a political point of view.

In order to start the analysis it is best to begin with a brief introduction to the concept of communication for development we subscribe to, and then make the connection to human development.

1.1 Brief introduction to communication for development

In the first World Summit of Communication for Development in 2006, organizers and members of the directive committee defined some of the fundamental principles of communication for development as a discipline[5].

Communication for development concerns, above all, people and the necessary processes that make the contribution of shared knowledge and perceptions easier,

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[4] A good example of tolos and indicators to measure the exercise of communication rights is found in the "Manual para la evaluación de los derechos a la comunicación" from the Communication Rights in the Information Society campaign, September 2005.
[5] Iniciativa de Comunicación, FAO, Banco Mundial, (2007): "World congress on communication for development: lessons, challenges, and the way forward".
[http://www.fao.org/nr/com/abst/com_071001_en.htm]

with the objective of producing positive results in terms of development. In this sense, the media and technology are means and not ends.

Communication thus follows a multidirectional horizontal model, as opposed to the traditional unidirectional vertical model (remittent-message-channel-recipient), and it increasingly resorts to the multiple innovative forms of communication that new technologies make possible.

This approach recognizes the reality is in great measure a social construction. From which it follows that several realities may exist in light of the same situation, according to the perceptions and necessities of the groups and persons involved. Therefore, the role of development, and thus of communication, is not to "impose" the correct reality but rather to favor dialogue in order to facilitate reciprocal comprehension between different points of view. Hence, communication for development respects and works with diverse societies, religions and cultures, communities and nations occupied in the processes of development.

2. Communication rights and human development

As is has already been stated previously, communication is a basic fundamental capability and an enabling capability for other capabilities. For example, to exercise communication capabilities allows for a better exercise of participation, agency and self-dignity.

In order to understand the relationship between communication, power and the capability approach it is necessary to analyze the "right to communicate" and more generally "communication rights".

Both are closely related, yet have different definitions and history. The "right to communicate" appeared with the debate with the New World Information and Communication Order, which originated in 1973 from the Non-Aligned Movement Countries whose member countries proclaimed the necessity of decolonizing communication and expressed their concerns about the impact of the media in national identity, culture, political and economic sovereignty. The right to communicate points to the need for formal legal recognition of the right as such as a general framework for a more effective implementation, and intuitively recognizes communication as a basic human right. According to its supporters, although there are many components of the right to communicate embedded within current human rights, its explicit declaration would reinforce and provide an improved framework to ensure effective communication, not only as a recognized right but as an exercised right as well.

It is said that Jean d'Arcy, radio and visual services director of the United Nations Department of Public Information, was the first to defend the cause of the right to communicate when he expressed "the time will come when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will have to encompass a more extensive right than man's right to information, first laid down 21 years ago in Article 19. It is about man's right to communicate. It is from this perspective that the future development of communication must be approached if it is to be fully understood" (d'Arcy 1969).

Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, also stated that "millions of people in the poorest countries are still excluded from the right to communicate, increasingly seen as a fundamental human right" (UN 2003).

The topic of the right to communicate was treated extensively at the World Summit of the Information Society, but the fear of controversy prevented it from being included in the final text, although there was a reference to it in the MacBride Report "Many voices, one world":

"Communication needs in a democratic society should be met by the extension of specific rights such as the right to be informed, the right to inform, the right to privacy, the right to participate in public communication - all elements of a new concept, the right to communicate. In developing what might be called a new era of social rights, we suggest all the implications of the right to communicate be further explored" (UNESCO 1980).

"Communication rights" as referred to throughout this text, put more emphasis on the fact that an international rights ordainment already exists to underpin communication, yet some are sometimes ignored and require active mobilization and affirmation.

It must be pointed out that, as stated in the Dominican Republic's Human Development Report 2008, capabilities have two dimensions: an individual dimension and a collective dimension. Individual capabilities (health, education, self-respect) revolve around the ability to do something, to be something, and thus to have self-esteem. Collective capabilities (participation interpersonal trust, trust in institutions, sense of belonging, mobilization, inclusion) are the enabling capabilities that allow individuals access to opportunities and to have an impact on collective decisions.

2.1 Beyond freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is situated one of the fundamental pillars of human rights. The article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that *"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of boundaries or borders".*

One must inquire if freedom of expression and freedom of the press are enough in societies with weak rule of law. According to the Dominican Republic's Human Development Report 2008, in societies with deficient rule of law access to opportunities depends on the level of power that people and the groups they belong to have (HDO/UNDP 2008:33). For this reason, human development is a matter of power.

This situation is seen reflected in the exercise of freedom of expression.

"The ideal from which freedom of expression draws its legitimacy is that of a group of communicating individuals, each with an equal right to conceive, impart and receive ideas to and from others and thereby to rationally arrive at decisions of mutual benefit.. The problem lies in that we do not live as a group of equally empowered individuals. We live in a society of largely varying levels of access to power, a society in which most interactions between people are heavily mediated and filtered, with mass media, governments, commercial corporations, special interest groups and many others all vying for attention, seeking to influence and control the creation and flow of ideas and information through communication. To insist exclusively on freedom of expression says too little about the process by which society's means of expression –such as newspapers, television, radio, film, music and educational material– are controlled, and the interests this control ultimately upholds" (CRIS 2005).

Thus, to ensure freedom of expression does not, in effect, guarantee communication rights. Furthermore, communication rights should be closely monitored by human development supporters since in the current information society power is shaped with and through the control of communication, and to revert such an imbalance of power these processes must be intervened.

In this context, freedom of expression can do very little to avoid the dominance of the stronger voices in the public sphere, be they governments, financial interest groups, religious institutions, or other type of elites.

Following the example of the authors of the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) campaign "how real is the freedom to receive and transmit information if a person can barely read or write, or is unable to speak the country's official language?" Or, how real is the freedom of "looking for and receiving information" if governments and corporations are not obliged to provide them?" Or, if one does not have the privilege to pay for educational material or fundamental means to access communication, such as phones and internet?" to what can be added, for example, what if the media is at the service of the groups of power or if journalists are censured or self-censured? These are symptoms of the unequal access to power. Therefore, an essential challenge for the supporters of freedom of expression is the conceptual change of the idea of equal individuals, to that of a complex and motley society with a very measured communication and with different structures of power. In order to confront and break the imbalances of power (HDO/UNDP 2008) an additional set of concepts and instruments is necessary, which makes up the core of the "communication rights" speech.

The creation of capabilities is necessary for the complete exercise of freedom of expression in a complex and mediated society, in which power and the control of resources is distributed unevenly, in order for communication rights to exist.

> Communication rights require the creation, not only formally but factually, of the conditions and the necessary capabilities for a positive cycle of human communication. This cycle implies a process of searching, receiving and transmitting , as well as listening and being listened to, understanding, learning, creating and responding. Though it is impossible to oblige others to listen and response, communication rights optimize the context in which this happens (CRIS, 2005).

Figure 2. The virtuous cycle of communication

The contrast and complementarily between freedom of expression and communication rights can be illustrated as follows:
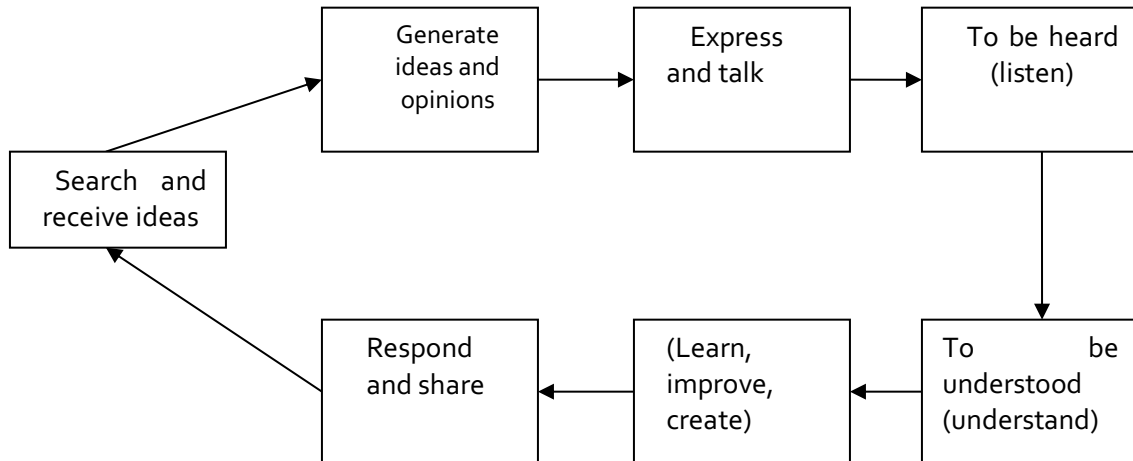
Source: CRIS, 2005.

2.2 Boundaries of communication rights

Communication rights include the right to participate in one's culture and language, to enjoy the benefits of science, education, participation in government, privacy, passive reunion, protection of one's reputation and more –all are contained in the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights". They also require measures that ensure the diversity of property and contents of the media and the right to have access to information for all (CRIS,2005). All of the above shape what will be known as the capability of and to communicate.

Hence, the objective of communication rights is as follows:

"To secure conditions for the generation of a creative and respectful cycle of interaction among individuals and groups in society which in practice endorses the right of all to have their ideas expressed, heard, listened to, considered and responded to equally." (CRIS 2005).

Therefore, a human development strategy should take into account the creation of capabilities for the generation of a virtuous cycle of interaction among individuals and groups in society that sustain the right of every person that their ideas be equally expressed, heard, listened to, considered and answered. Such a strengthening of capabilities would, undoubtedly, have a repercussion in people's freedom to choose the life they wish to live.

Work is needed to ensure that communication rights are exercised to prevent the powerful from being over privileged. With communication rights society can advance towards a greater human development.

2.3 Communication rights as enabling rights of a set of rights: communication to enable collective capabilities.

According to the authors of the CRIS campaign:
• Communication rights have implications for social and collective rights beyond their implications for individual rights, since they affirm the rights of ethnic and cultural groups, linguistic communities, and others. Support for diversity is also inherent to communication rights through the increased attributed value of mutual respect and tolerance.

• Communication rights cannot be built simply as relative to communication among equal individuals. They imply social structures that force and enable, in a differential manner, the capability of diverse groups of people to communicate. Therefore, they aim for changes in governance of unequal social structures and dynamics.

Communication rights must be built upon a set of rights additional to freedom of expression and that are related to other key human rights, rights that "flank" or "enable" other rights, found in the three main agreements of human rights: the "*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*" of 1948, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* of 1966, and the *International Covenant of Economic, Cultural and Social Rights,* of 1966".

Next, we list humans rights that are guaranteed by these agreements and that would be contained within communication rights since at least one dimension of each and every one of these rights has a strong presence in the process of communication in society. That is, in order to enjoy these rights the ability to develop collective capabilities that somehow lie in the capability to communicate is needed, which need communication to be enabled and exercised:

• The right to participate in one's culture and use one's mother tongue, including ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities;
• The right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications;
• The right to information regarding governance and matters of public interest;
• The right to the protection of moral interests and copyright materials;
• The right to honor and reputation, and the protection against unjustified harms against them;
• The right to privacy;
• The right of association and passive reunion;
• The right of self-determination and to take part in the government;
• The right to free primary education and the progressive introduction of free secondary education.

There are other rights, such as the right to a plural, diverse and independent media and access to it. Though these are not contained in these three declarations they are contemplated in forums as diverse as the European Court of Human Rights, Court of Sri Lanka', the Federal Constitutional Court of Germany, Declarations by UNESCO and Resolutions of the Council European Union (Article XIX, 2003). "Some communication rights aim at overcoming barriers to listening, such as prejudice, hatred,

discrimination and intolerance. They advocate cultural and social self-determination, appeal for a sensible balance between rewarding creativity and ensuring that all can reap the benefits, and promote education." (CRIS, 2005).

2.4 Communication rights and power

El poder es la capacidad relacional que permite a un actor social influir en las decisiones de otros actores sociales de modo que se favorezcan la voluntad, los intereses y los valores del actor que tiene el poder [5]

¿Y cómo se ejerce el poder? construyendo significados en la mente humana mediante los procesos de comunicación que tiene lugar en las redes multimedia globales-locales de comunicación de masas, incluida la autocomunicación de masas (producción autónoma de flujos de información a través de internet) [5]

Si las relaciones de poder se construyen en gran medida en la mente humana, y si la construcción de significado en la mente humana depende de los flujos de información e imágenes procesados en las redes de comunicación se podría concluir que el poder reside en las redes de comunicación (controladas por élite políticas, económicas, religiosas etc)

An inherent part of the emergency of communication rights in the practice is the creation of a climate of mutual respect and tolerance, not only amongst individuals but amongst diverse communities, cultures, ethnic groups and nationalities as well.

Finally, communication rights lead us to enquire if the existent public policies and the power structures of society enable in a different manner the capability of individuals and crowds to communicate effectively in a public sphere. The concept of communication rights is related to the concept of development developed by Sen, since it the spirit of "freedom of expression" in a broader manner; not only as a form of freedom in the sense of absence of limitations over individuals, but also as the elimination of restrictions that burden excluded crowds, and the creation of communicative capabilities within those groups in order for them to be able to defend their interests as well as the common welfare.

3. Communication in the capability approach

The scope of the capability approach permits the resizing of a free and equal society, since what this approach underlines are not the rights individuals count on (their assets, resources, or basic necessities), but their possibility to choose (capability) and to carry out what has been chosen (functioning), that is, what people are able to achieve with what they have, that is, what they can truly be or do.

A dignified life is built as people acquire a set of capabilities to function, which allows them to accomplish those aspects that they consider valuable for their lives. Therefore, the development of capabilities becomes a priority task for democratic societies that have made ideals of freedom and equity their own. A free society is that in which people count with a set of capabilities that allow them to carry out a life they consider valuable. One then no longer investigates about the level of a person's satisfaction or their amount of resources to carry on one life or the other, but about

what these people are really capable of doing and being (Urquijo, 2008). The building axes of the capability approach are the "utily functions" and "capabilities".

Sen considers a set of interrelated utility functions that consist of states and actions. Hence, a person's fulfillment could be understood as the sum of his or her utility functions (Urquijo 2008:32, citing Sen). Simple utility functions are the most basic ones, as being well fed, having good health, not suffering from preventable diseases or premature death. Sen refers to "complex utility functions" as those "represented by functions with greater complexity, such as being happy, achieving self-dignity, and being able to participate in community life" among others (Urquijo 2008:32). Alkire notes some indicators for the selection of utility functions that might be of use for the construction of indexes, without forgetting that these must be defined by those primarily affected (Urquijo, 2008 citing Alkire):

- That the utility functions must be part of the set of capabilities.
- utility functions are related to a basic human necessity without which a person might ruin her/himself.
- A utility functions functioning cannot depend on another functioning considered basic.
- A utility functions cannot depend on an ability that is uncommon or of no interest.
- The level of functioning must be observed and experimented empirically.
- The supply of utility functions does not necessarily commit the freedom of obtaining another significant utility functions on the long run.

Urquijo adds as an indicator the degradation of a utility functions, which reflects the deterioration of a freedom.
We consider that communication meets these conditions, so it might be considered as a utility functions.

On the other hand, Sen assumes the concept of capability as an expression of the real freedom with which an individual must count with in order to achieve what he or she values, that is, freedom is understood as a capability. Freedom is understood as a capability that allows the development of the agency.

The relation between operations and capabilities is bidirectional "because utility functions and the different vectors of utility functions among which one can choose, build a capability and the absence of capabilities reflects the deterioration of a person's utility functions. The combination of utility functions reflects the capability and real achievements (Urquijo 2008:50).

Sen refers to as "complex operations" those "represented by functions with greater complexity, such as being happy, having dignity and being able to participate in the community life" among others (Urquijo 2008:32). And more precisely, a common characteristic of complex operations is built "from", "in" and "through" a society or community through a relation of dialogue and communicative interaction. As it has been stated previously, communication is the foundation of all social organization.

Moreover, the capability approach promotes public and open dialogue when evaluating the set of valuable utility functions on behalf of all those affected, which allows to decide what utility functions are to be considered centrally important (Urquijo 2008).

The study "Voices of the poor" (2000)[6] by the World Bank interviewed more than 60 000 people in 60 countries, and concluded that poverty means "not having a voice" to exert influence on the fundamental decisions that affect their lives. This confirms the idea that communication is considered a fundamental capability by those mainly affected by poverty. For those interviewed, poverty goes beyond the lack of income and also means not having a voice to influence the fundamental decisions that affect their lives, or their representation in the local and national political institutions.

Also, communication has a direct relation with human development and the capability approach in that every society should identify those capabilities it considers fundamental in order to carry on the lives it wishes to live. And to that end it is necessary to begin a dialogue and consensus process that gives way to the definition of that set of capabilities. Any human development strategy must fulfill a plural process, without recipes, since it will depend on the achievements and possibilities of each society at each moment in time.

3.1 To communicate as a fundamental human capability

We consider the capability to communicate as a fundamental human capability, as an end for the individual, and as a necessary capability to enable a set of collective capabilities.

Both ideas, the right to communicate as well as communication rights, are closely related to human development, given that they act as enabling rights for other rights, as will be shown later in this paper. Also, some functionings related to communication

Talking, reading and writing can be thought of as utility **functions** conforming what we could refer to as the capability to communicate, which is also necessary to enable series of other capabilities. For example, to participate in public life it is necessary to have or enable open channels of communication and make use of communicative abilities, both individual and collective. Ejercer las capacidades comunicativas habilita para un mejor ejercicio de la participación, de la agencia y de la auto-dignidad.

The communication rights are closely related to human development, since in their individual dimension they represent a "capability to" (the individual ability to communicate, which is an end in itself) and they also possess a collective dimension, since they enable other rights and capabilities (the ability to participate, for example).

Communication rights can be exercised through a set of enabling capabilities. And to ensure these capabilities grants them a new additional sense. Their enablement would come through the equal empowerment of all in the field of communication and through the heightening of a virtuous communication cycle.

This generalized ability to engage in dialogue would lead to the deepening of communication and to a virtuous cycle that would, ultimately, contribute to mutual understanding and respect, and a greater human development.

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[6] The study was the result of 10 years of intense consultations with people affected by the poverty of five continents

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  │ Talking, Reading,  │                            │  Participate in the   │
  │ Writing, freely    │                            │ public life, participate in │
  │ expressing.        │                            │  the culture, associate,    │
  │                    │                            │         etc.          │
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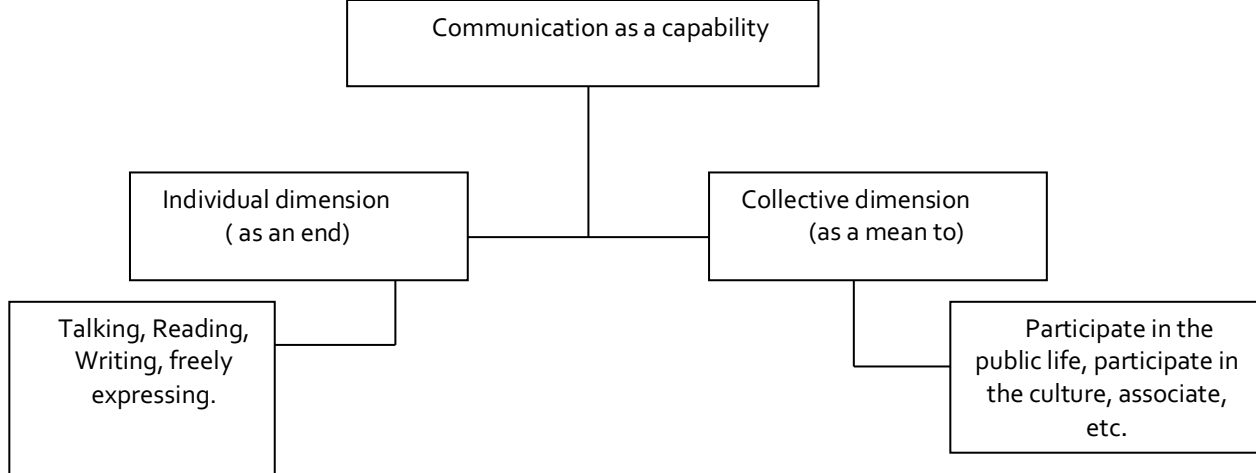
Figure 1. Communication as a capability

In this line of action, the creation of capabilities to effectively exercise communication rights should accomplish the following aspects:

- Broaden the access to information, culture and knowledge that shape the essence of communication;

- Protect against diverse abuses of the use of communication by governmental or private elites;

- Reinforce people's capability to participate in culture and creativity, as well as in governance and in public policies.

- Contribute to an environment in which people are prepared to receive messages, understand them and answer them, and to communicate in a critical, competent and creative manner.

- Nurture an environment of tolerance and mutual respect in the context of communication.

Attributes of Communication as a Capability

➢ Its different expressions permit the improvement of self-dignity and self-recognition, manifestation of ideas, feelings and fears, to know people more and better.
➢ Prepares people to improve their human and interpersonal relations, exercising their capability of empathy and communicative quality.
➢ Contributes so that people relate with each other, integrate, fulfilling their affective needs of individual and collective cohesion and identity.
➢ Influences in the modification of behavior, reinforcing or questioning knowledge, practices and attitudes.
➢ Constitutes a vehicle of expression of cultural freedom.
➢ Constitutes the bridge between government and citizenship acting as a complement to political channels (vote, political parties, laws, etc.) and public administration (services, burocracy, etc.)
➢ Brings private topics to public debate and sensitizes people about themselves by making common responsibilities visible.
➢ Enables participation and the exercise of leadership.
➢ Makes visible the values and aspirations of each person and the collective.

Source: own production based on Asociación de Comunicadores Sociales Calandria, 2005.

3.2 Implications of communication for equity

3.2.1 Equity in the capability approach

Equity is related to the equal access to opportunities and warranties of equal rights and obligations, and it is associated to the idea of righteousness. Equity is a value that has been built from Universalist ethics, has been assumed through a set of moral values, and takes place in political practices.

Equity, understood as one of the pillars of human development, pretends to change the relations of power that generate inequality. Therefore, equity implies placing at the forefront the need to coordinate political and social commitments around the generation of real opportunities so that every person can free themselves from systems that deny the satisfaction of vital necessities. (D`Elia y Maingon 2004:46)

Equity is defined as equal opportunity, yet it is not feasible without real equality in rights and powers that is fully accepted and socially exercised. Equity is related to the social and legal acknowledgement of rights and the exercise of power. In a society where individuals do not recognize themselves as equal, it is hard to find opportunities for all. And secondly, in a society of equals where there is no equity there will be a restricted equality since we are all different from a biological, social and cultural point of view and we need different things at different times. So, to assert equality equity policies are needed. "The multiple forms of inequality take place in the womb of society as the result of relations and hierarchies of power that affect the conditions

and ways of life, as well as possibilities of rising and developing as subjects equally valid subjects." (D`Elia y Maingon, 2004:6).

The acknowledgement and exercise of human rights, especially social and cultural rights, are the starting point of equity. Though, "it is not enough for rights to be legally acknowledged if the state or the society ignores their existence and in practice make their exercise impossible".

In this sense, "it is important for rights to be defined in the realm of capabilities or real liberties and not only in the field of the established legal order, which may not be representative of the capabilities of society and social groups" (D`Elia y Maingon, 2004:46).

In this context, where rights are considered central elements in the process of social inclusion, social and cultural rights regain a special importance, not only for the importance of the access to goods, resources and means for the satisfaction of important necessities for living, but also as "rights of fulfillment" of a good life in accordance with culture, values, and each person, group and folks aspirations "in a framework of collective responsibility with others", that is, in a framework of respect for human rights. These rights, especially the "rights of fulfillment" are often denied to society in regimes of repression.

As for the dimension of capabilities, in human development "opportunity could be understood as a condition in which people have the certainty, security, and the trust that they will have real possibilities at their reach, enough and appropriate to live a good life". For this, it is necessary to take into account the cultural, socioeconomic and political conditions in which people live, since each situation deserves the development of different public policies that give way to equal opportunities for all. In this sense, according to the human development framework, opportunities must exist in two forms simultaneously: as equal opportunities of "access to" and as equal opportunities of "capabilities for"".

Opportunities "of access to", refer to "the equal availability and distribution of policies, resources and means of attention that heighten the ways of satisfaction and satisfiers of human necessities and increase the possibilities of achieving a better life". The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), for example, has pointed out that equal opportunities should take into account the access to jobs and education as key elements in breaking the circle of poverty (D`Elia y Maingon, 2004 cited CEPAL)

Opportunities "of capabilities for" include "fulfilled capabilities or the actual states and the stocks of quality of life, valued from an objective and subjective point of view by individuals and society itself –for example, health and education conditions- as well as potential capabilities or attainable states of quality of life that people aspire to obtain through daily struggles" (D`Elia y Maingon, 2004:52).

The dimension of the options in equity underlines that it is also a vital capability for people to be able to develop, express themselves and live a life they value in their differences, as well as overcoming any type of discrimination or inequality grounded in these differences.

3.2.2. Equity and Communication

Following D'Elia y Maingon, equity has a relation with the four ethical-political principles: equality, justice, universality and diversity. We will focus in the principle of diversity to establish a relation between equity and communication.

Diversity is linked to the need of constructing a form of social equality based on the acknowledgement of "others" as individuals. That is to say, it is about every person being able to feel as part of society as an equal, but equal in our own subjectivity, will and capability of internal, personal and concrete action, with the right of having an own culture (D`Elia y Maingon, 2004:43). This individual is built, to our understanding, in interpersonal and intercultural relations through a communicative relation and in the womb of the public sphere.

The notion of public sphere is fundamental in the principle of diversity and essential for the construction of a form of social equality based in the acknowledgement of "others" as individuals. In other words, it is about everyone being able to feel as part of society as equal in diversity, since it is upon it that the notion of citizenship gains sense. The public sphere, as a stage where citizens argue and decide matters of collective interest, was formed in the 18th century in countries like France and Germany with a restricted scope. That is, it was limited to those who could read and participated in illustrated circles, leaving excluded from the public sphere until mid-1900s, women, laborers, and peasants. According to Garcia Canclini[7] (García Canclini 1995) the public sphere now overflows the sphere of classical political interactions y becomes the "framework of media-production" thanks to which institutional and technological device characteristic of current societies presents multiple aspects of social life. For Arendt "the public sphere is the place for human affairs, the space in which the common interests of a society are built, in the adventure of being together among members of a modern and complex macro community" (Arendt 1993:59). This refers us to the space where citizens interact through means such as speech and persuasion, and decide, through collective deliberation, about matters of common concern. From this, we are able to distinguish between public and private interests, where the exercise of citizenship implies the active concern for public interests.

The practice of citizenship and the exercise of diversity depend on the reactivation of the public sphere where individuals can act collectively and commit themselves to the common deliberation about matters that affect them as a political community.

In this respect, Gumucio sustains that the public sphere is filled with contradictions, interventions, and diverging voices. The construction of citizenship in an equity framework can only be possible in conditions in which voices are able to express themselves to the full extent of their cultural capability in a space of dialogue and horizontal debate (Gumucio 2001:2-23).

The public sphere, following Alfaro, "unites us and prevents us from falling on each other, since it calls for mutual respect and minimum consensus. It refers to being able to generate power to join together and associate, to share points of view. It also refers to the establishment of links between people from different social, cultural and political

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[7] García Canclini postulates that citizenship not only deals with rights recognized by the state apparatus to who is born in a territory, but also by social and cultural practices that produce a sense of belonging and make those who have the same language, similar ways of organizing and fulfilling their needs feel the different.

strata through debate and mutual listening. It is a communicative movement that articulates society to influence and decide about collective decisions, but where every individual subject, institution or community is worthy on their own" (Alfaro, 2005: 231-260). Thus, the reactivation of the public sphere refers us to equity, since equity would allow for the positioning at the forefront of the reaching of political and social commitments around the generation of real opportunities that allow people to free themselves from systems which deny the fulfillment of their vital necessities.

The reflection stated by Elia y Maingon becomes particularly interesting in their reference to the link between identity, freedom, and power which, although clearly made with individuals in mind, would make even more sense if it referred to collectivity. They suggest that precisely the forms of dominance and oppression, of a group over another, exist when one of the group self-cancels its identity, denies itself, what takes away its freedom of choosing what it wants to be. This relation is closely related to cultural freedom, self-dignity and participation, which bear their means of expression in the communicative processes.

In this sense, various approaches point to what could be framed as perspectives of individual and collective empowerment, focused on the construction of the individual and the possibility that citizens could mutually acknowledge themselves as equal within a diversity of languages and options of life. Firstly, this construction takes place in the realm of personal autonomy, strengthening the self to fend off any type of dominance and discrimination, as we will see later on when we discuss empowerment; and secondly, in the realm of "moral autonomy inside a pluralist world that strengthens the coexistence of cultural identities and the acceptance of a shared world, being so enabled for self-acknowledgement and the acknowledgement of others" (D`Elia y Maingon 2004: 37) That, as we've already seen, has a direct relation with the activation of the public sphere.

In this line of thinking Vega Romero (D`Elia y Maingon 2004: 37 citing Vega Romero) points that methodology of work to carry on this process consists of three steps: the critic to the existent dominance model; the promotion of subjectivity through self-acknowledgement, the disassembly of moral truths and the proposal of alternatives; and the ethic and political participation in the decision-making. This methodological proposal necessarily requires dialogue, amongst the collective and of the collective with society. It also requires expression, through different channels, for self-recognition and the recognition of society. To improve the capability to organize and to understand the interests of excluded groups communication processes are needed to aid in their conformation and to create collective understandings.

Equity also represents a value that collects what society, institutions and people consider as differences or unjust and unnecessary conditions for people's lives and the social groups to which they belong to.

And, civil society through the media or alternative means (communicative actions of mobilization and political incidence, campaigns, blogs, use of communitarian media, etc.) can pressure institutions to effectively respond in order to guarantee the equal access to all public goods.

Finally, equity seeks, "in the first place, that we are all acknowledged as part of a social set, not only in what makes us alike but in what makes us different as well, and in the second place, that what makes us different have a valid representation" (D`Elia y Maingon, 2004:53).

In this sense, to call for communication rights endorses and supports the notion and value of diversity, given that the processes of listening and exchange of ideas and mutual response lie at their core. "Communication rights cannot be achieved by imposing uniformity of thought, but only by accepting and valuing diversity as a starting point. Thus, communication rights have major implications for social and collective communication, and for diversity. Supporting communication rights is not just staking a claim for individuals; it has immense implications for relations among and between groups and societies, and for how we approach such issues as difference and diversity" (CRIS, 2005).

The communicative challenge for human development in historically fragmented societies and found amongst them due to the lack of equity, would then be to exalt differences but at the same time, to condemn inequalities. In this ground it will be important to recognize a will for change in order to cement networks of conversation and debate, defining common interests. And civil society, especially communicators and journalists, is the mediator of a new democratic struggle that must be undertaken. Following Alfaro (Alfaro, 2005), a public sphere that is close to the people and with viable dialogue practices that lead us to take decisions is required.

3.2.3 Implications for efficiency

In respect to efficiency, the main dimension of human development is economic growth. Efficiency is the optimal use of existent resources. That is the way to increase to its highest level, the material base that allows the fulfillment of human options.
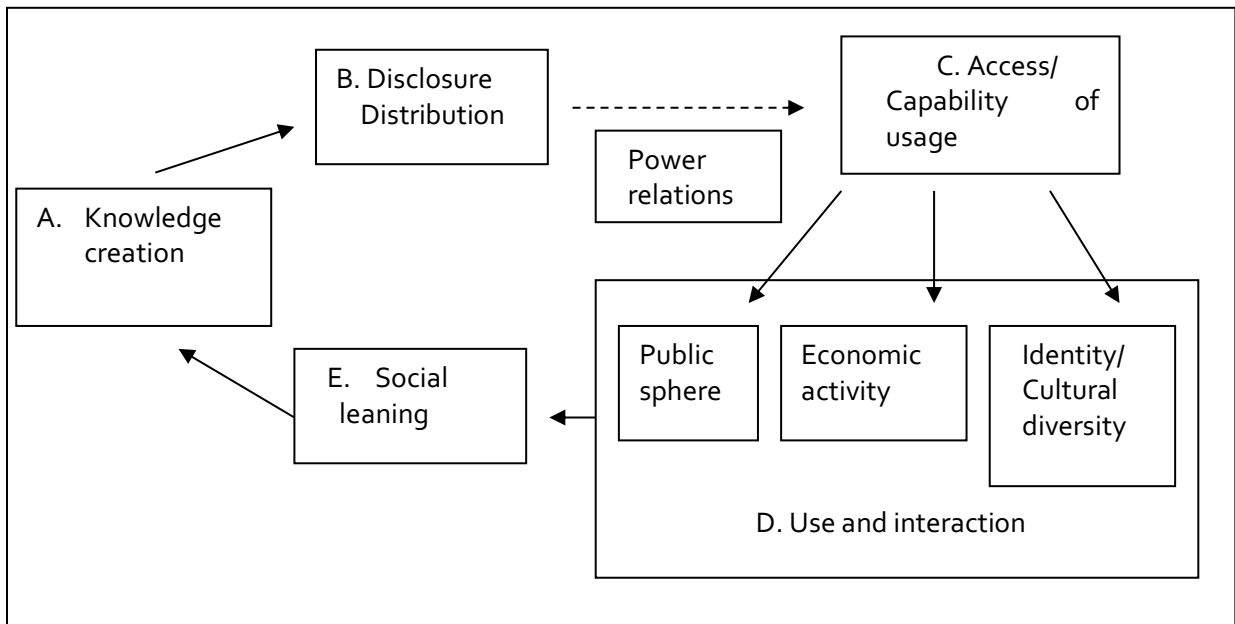
In the present, knowledge, together with the technology applied in production processes are the sources of wealth . that is, the capability to effectively generate, process and apply information based on knowledge. The foundation of this new global economic dynamic is the technological revolution that has been underway since the 1970s (Ceara-Hatton 2005).

In the new international development model, the source of productivity lies in the technology that generates knowledge, the processing of information and the communication of symbols.

New technologies of information and communication are not only tools to apply, but also processes to develop. Users and creators can become one. In this sense, users can take over technology, as is the case of the internet. From this is deduced a close relation between social processes of creation and manipulation of symbols (society's culture) and the capability of producing and distributing goods and services (productive forces). For the first time in history the human mind is a direct productive force, not only a decisive element in the production system.

As we see below, the process of social communication is closely related to the generation of knowledge. A virtuous cycle of communication facilitates the creation of knowledge.

Figure 3. Process of Social Communication for the Creation of Knowledge

B. Disclosure Distribution

C. Access/ Capability of usage

Power relations

A. Knowledge creation

E. Social leaning

Public sphere

Economic activity

Identity/ Cultural diversity

D. Use and interaction

Source: CRIS 2005 and own elaboration.

A. Knowledge occurs through the entire society (politics, education, science, culture, and economics).
B. Knowledge is given out and distributed through formal and informal education, the media, libraries, movie theaters, political communication, interpersonal channels, Technologies of Information and Communication, etc.
C. The access and the capability to use knowledge are strongly influenced by power relations. It is necessary, first, to access and then to be capable of using this knowledge with the goal of achieving individual and collective objectives to carry out the life that one has reasons to value.
D. Through communication knowledge is put into use: in the public sphere, knowledge underpins the democratic processes and social institutions (governance); knowledge is put into use in economic activity that sustains the material existence; and it is put into use in the vital process of the continual formation of individual and collective identity (values for coexistence, collective imaginaries), as well as for the cultural and artistic ventures.
E. In this sense, it is said that social learning is the society's capability to confront and resolve problems of general interest. With some luck, the entire process improves the creative process of knowledge creation.

As a concrete example of the value of communication for efficiency, we could refer to the value of the information generated and managed by the public sector. In the pledge of its duties, the public sector collects, treats and diffuses commercial and financial, judicial and administrative information, related to all sectors. These informative resources have considerable economic potential that remains, in great measures, wasted. The information of the public sector, as recognized by the European Commission, constitutes a key resource for the economic and social development in the present. The information of the public sector is, then, an important economic asset: constitutes the raw material for new services, improvement of the existent ones and facilitates commerce. The presence of available information products based on the information of the public sector could facilitate the functioning of society as a whole. Nonetheless, there are many barriers that hinder this process in developing countries.

3.3 Communication, empowerment and liberty

3.3.1 Communication in the process of individual and collective empowerment

We understand empowerment as the ability of people to influence the processes and decisions that affect them. It presupposes the creation of diverse individual capabilities and their use for participation or collective action, what is called collective empowerment. (ODH/PNUD 2008:6).

Both types of capabilities, individual and collective, are necessary and must be constructed simultaneously for substantive and real empowerment to exist.

Empowerment is an intangible factor that stimulates the relations of cooperation among human groups and strengthens the proper behavior of collective action through reciprocity, social cohesion, and mutual trust between people, groups and organizations.

Empowerment is a value in itself since it tries to make people acknowledge themselves as main characters in their own stories, make them have self-esteem, control over their lives, and that they could be able to develop their capabilities and generate opportunities. (ODH/PNUD 2008:6)

In brief, we understand as empowerment the process by which people strengthen their self-esteem, trust, vision, and leadership, as well as their different capabilities to participate and exert influence in a social context. It includes the dynamics of learning, through which people are aware of their rights, capabilities and interests, and how these relate to other peoples' interests to participate in the decision-making process from a more solid position, and being able to institutionalize norms that are less vulnerable to the arbitrary and deliberate use of influencing elites.(INDH 2008: 358)

Empowerment implies a process of transformation, of continual ascending evolution through which the individual and the collective become aware and control their decisions (agency) and with this, transform their own role in society. This process implies a cycle of reflection and action in which communication and information play an important role.

3.3.2 How does social empowerment happen?

There is no precise formula for people to empower themselves. Although, according to the World Bank (World Bank 2002: 20-25) successful experiences have shared four characteristic elements, which bear a close relation with the processes of information and communication:

● **Access to information.** Informed citizens are in better conditions to demand their rights and demand accountability to their public officials. Freedom of the press, veracious information, freedom of access to public information, transparency in public management, among others is mechanisms that empower populations.

Governance requires public discussion and the participation of society in the decision-making process; therefore, the organization of interest groups and the free exchange of ideas, opinions and information are essential for democracy. To tend to the needs of information and communication of the most disfavored and oppressed sectors is also essential, particularly when they lack basic information concerning their rights, public services, health, education, jobs, etc. These groups usually lack the visibility and possibilities to define their political priorities and access resources.

The access to public information trains for dialogue, negotiation, and decision-making and reduces the level of uncertainly.

- **Inclusion and participation**

When talking about inclusion we should necessarily talk about public policies that favor it. But, what happens if there is a lack of such policies? The process of inclusion can also come about from exclusion. When the individual and the collective become aware of their situation, they organize, mobilize and empower themselves to break with the balance of power that did not allow them to access opportunities.

Only when social groups have the capability to pressure and can exhibit some level of power are they taken into account on the decisions that affect them. Those who lack power are simply ignored.

Thus, we consider that participation and communication are linked, since for a real process of inclusion and participation to exist, which leads to empowerment of excluded groups, these must have access to the proper information and follow a process of communication that allows them to make public their situation and the options for improvement, among other aspects.

- **Responsibility and accountability.**

Accountability is understood as the delivery of information to the citizens about the objectives and results of the government's management and of the public entities with the goal of generating dialogue, building trust and improving institutional performance.

For the consolidation of democracy systems of balance of power must be fomented, where communication is one of the fundamental elements since it improves accountability of the different institutions of the public sector, monitors the exercise of power (of the government as well as of other elites) avoiding its concentration and limits the actions that lead to corruption (Langseth, 2001: 40).

The OECD, the World Bank, the European Union, International Transparency and other actors broadly recognize the role that an informed civil society plays in the fight against corruption. In such way, civil society's organizations have benefited from the emergence of multiple channels of communication and different practices to demand a greater accountability, support the processes of supervision and report corrupt practices of the government.

For example, the EU established communication as one of the axis points of the efforts of the fight against corruption in the countries that are candidates for adhesion.

The "Communication about a communitarian policy against corruption" assures that "the strengthening of independent media and the free flow of information are the main efforts that a country can carry out in such a task".

- **Local organizational capability for the common interest.**

It is the possibility of people working together, organizing and mobilizing resources to solve problems of common interest. The groups with greater deprivations resort to one another in search of support and strength to solve daily problems, occasionally using informal mechanisms. In general, the organized population has more probabilities of obtaining answers to their demands than communities with little organization. This capability is built locally and becomes complex through local, regional and national networks, which increases its potential to play a key role on the country's institutionalism (ODH/PNUD, 2008). All that organizational action requires a communicative process that weaves consensus and dialogue between different actors thus permitting the visualization of socially unaccepted situations and the participation of the traditionally excluded groups in the public sphere.

Also, an adequate communication policy permits the visualization and legitimization of local actors through their experiences and proposal, showing the results of their actions and skills.

3.3.3 Including from exclusion: human development and power

The process of empowerment advances as the individual, and the collective become aware of their situation and their possibilities and gain self-confidence.

Integrity and living in a conscious manner are essential in order to create the values of worth and autonomy and to have a healthy self-esteem. For example, there are numerous investigations in which it is affirmed that in traditionally discriminated populations, like indigenous folks, the effects of low self-esteem are noticeable: unhappiness, irrationality, blindness in the face of reality, stiffness, fear of the new, conformity, violence, distrust, submission, repressed feeling and hostility against others. The isolation in which they have lived historically inhibits the processes of socialization and communication.

The development of these capabilities in the future, as a result of education, formal and informal (for example, is part of the informal education the participation in the public sphere through the traditional, alternative or communitarian media) will probably positively influence self-esteem.

In this sense, communication and culture bear a strong relation. It is not possible to love and hold in high esteem what is not known and is not recognized bfore "the others", before society. Thus, the implementation of policies or actions that expose and value the cultural expressions of a society is of special importance.

The development of communicative capabilities of the individual and the collective, increases self-esteem, permits the acquisition of degrees of determination and empowers the individual, not only in order to know his own reality, but in order to build it from his own knowledge as well; to make the difference or diversity explicit, to build community.

As stated by Olmos (2004) empowerment requires an access to information, as well as to the channels of expression. But not only this, the construction of power also implies that the individual, and the collective, generate or increase their own information, their own knowledge and their communicative links. Human development requires a collective work of growth, self-recognition, self-perception, self-esteem and self-

determination. For this reason a community strengthens and demonstrates its identity by strengthening and valuing the cultural expressions that enrich its cultural heritage (Olmos, 2004:2). This fact is especially important if we consider that we are in a globalized culture of media-production where images and symbolic representations, imposed by dominating powers, rapidly interact in the dynamic of the community and the identity of its members. Castells also affirms it (Castells: 1999) as he states that in a world of global flows of wealth, power and images, the search of identity, collective and individual, attributed and constructed, constitutes the fundamental source of social meaning.

According to the Dominican Republic's Human Development Report 2008 (INDH 2008) in societies with a weak rule of law, the access to opportunities is marked by the level of power the person or the group to which he or she belongs to has. For this reason human development is a matter of power (ODH/PNUD 2008:33).

To achieve human development people's capabilities must be broadened to allow them to communicate their own perceptions and make their demands and initiatives visible, especially those of excluded groups. And for excluded groups to mobilize they must, first, be conscious of their situation of exclusion and the channels to direct their demands, if they exist, for which they need to have access to information.

The Dominican NHDR 2008 also states that there are no weighted reasons to think that societies will gravitate spontaneously towards institutions that promote the equal distribution of power. If weak and dysfunctional institutions are replaced for ones that guarantee the exercise of rights and obligations with equality, that increase social welfare and human development (equal opportunities) necessarily there must be losers and winners. Institutional change might happen when interested groups acquire enough power to impose to the eventual losers, that is, when the structure of power breaks or when the current groups of power and society are able to reach an agreement that allows them to feel compensated after the change, and therefore decide to boost policies that guarantee a more equal distribution of capabilities.

For this change, following Alfaro (Alfaro 2000) a communication that seeks dialogues, the construction of agreements, the creation of networks, spaces, behaviors of solidarity, and that promotes collective empowerment; that raises in a different way the idea of community tied to freedom, in a politics of continuous approaches and collective commitments. It is about defining a communication that places itself in the center of the creation and maintenance of the public in the constructive sense, understanding by interests, common spaces and images that guarantee a democracy assumed as value and practice. In addition, it must be taken into account that there are significant links between consumption and citizenship, and that democracy is closely related with to the media, since through the latter power can be visualized. It is then about defining a communication that tests power helps break the current unequal structures and helps forge other equilibriums empowering citizens.

A strategy of empowerment that requires the generation of changes "from below" through participation and creation of capabilities (Cañete and Ceara Hatton 2008) should consider communication, not only for the instruments it can make attainable for "those below" as an empowerment tool for their voices to be heard, but also understood as a process, as a place where changes occur. The construction of a great consensus will happen only if "those below" could show a certain level to be taken into account; and these consensuses are debated today in the political arena and in the great media-production square.

If no communication channels are opened for the "invisibles", if they remain excluded from the decision-making process, it is correspondence of civil society and some responsible media, and/or alternative media, to open such channels.

The local communitarian and alternative media, interpersonal channels and the local decision-making processes are considered central in the process of human development. To promote capabilities for the negotiation and mediation also result in great utility to generate strategies that influence governors, legislatures, and the public opinion

4. Role of the media in human development

As analyzed by Sen (Sen 1982), there has never been a famine in countries that enjoy a broad freedom of the press, due to its task of monitoring power and its power to raise the voice and claims of the most vulnerable groups.

First, Sen revalues the value of freedom of the press and freedom of expression in general, to improve people's lives: "There are enough reasons to seek communication with one another and to desire a better comprehension of the world we live in"[8]. Sen states that freedom of the press has a fundamental incidence in our capability to achieve this. "When this freedom is absent and people are deprived of the possibility of communicating, it is at the expense of the quality of human life, even when the authoritarian government that imposes such restrictions is that of a very wealthy country in terms of Gross National Product." Though, as we've previously exposed, it is not enough to highlight freedom of expression or freedom of the press for communication to lead to an improved human development.

Second, Sen underlines the contribution of the freedom of the press to the quality of people's lives by "creating a space of expression for those marginalized and disfavored", which accordingly to the author impacts human security. This is the same argument expressed in Development and Freedom, where it is explained that a country where "press without censorship" is exercised it will be less likely for a famine or a catastrophe to occur, since leaders would have to pay a very high price for the critics of the media, and thus it incites to act appropriately to avoid such crises. Though, unfortunately, it is not enough with a "press without censorship" to avoid such catastrophes. A media with enough capability to exercise the power of monitoring and freedom of the pressures by groups of powers is needed.

So he cites great famines that have occurred in authoritarian colonial regimes (like India under the British), in repressive military regimes (like in Ethiopia and Sudan), and in one-party states (such as the Soviet Union in the 1930s, China from 1958 to 1961, Cambodia in the 1970s or North Korea in recent years). Though the proportion of the national population affected by famine does not tend to exceed the 10%, what does not mean much in terms of election, the public debate around natural disasters can make it a political matter of considerable magnitude.

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[8] These contributions are based on the article written by Amartya Sen for the World Press Freedom Day on request of the World Association of Newspapers (WAN).

The third important attribute of free press, according to Sen, is the essential informative role it plays as it diffuses information and gives way to a critical analysis. "The informative function of the press tries to keep people informed about what occurs and where. On the other hand, investigative journalism can reveal information that otherwise would pass unnoticed or would have even stayed in total darkness".

A growing number of studies suggest that the predominance of the media can be related to the improvement of the delivery of public services, since the coverage of the media creates pressure for accountability (Adsera, Boix y Payne, 2003).

Also, the report of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE) "Latin American Economic Outlook 2008", the first made by this institution for the region, demonstrates the correlation between quality and independence of the media and fiscal incomes.

Figure 4: Relation between tax revenue and high-quality independent media
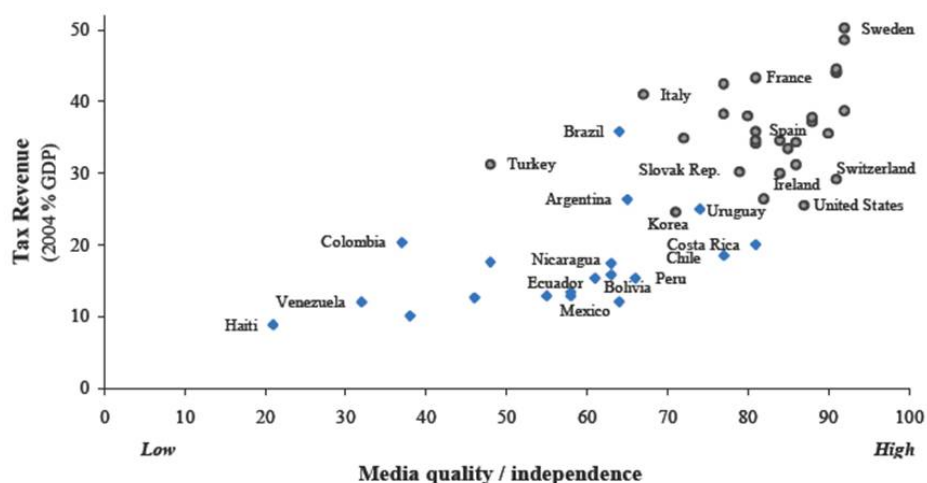
Source: OECD Development Centre (2007); based on ILPES, CEPALSTAT, OECD Revenue Statistics and Freedom House data (2006). StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/120628087167

Source: OCDE Latin American Economic Outlook 2008

This graph shows a strong and positive correlation between the indicators of the presence of a qualified and independent media in a country and fiscal incomes as a proportion of the GDP of that country. Also, it suggests the crucial importance of the role that the media and other independent vigilant can play on improving the efficiency and the legitimacy of the fiscal systems in Latin America, as well as in all the parts of the world. (OCDE 2008:51).

The role of the media is fundamental in the promotion of good governance through institutional monitoring. The media are a critical element in the accountability of the

institutions of a country and in the efforts to fight corruption. It bears a double role: not only does it increase the public conscience about corruption, its causes, consequences and possible remedies, but also investigates and discloses incidences of corruption. The efficiency of the media depends on access to information and on freedom of expression, as well as in a professional and ethical board of investigative journalists and of their independence from other powers.

UNDP, in various documents, has tried to highlight the growing importance of the role of the media and the TICs in human development: they are becoming the stage of public debate and of construction of the verisimilitude of the political fact, but they are also actors of the public process and as such have an incidence in the definition of a public agenda, with leading media actors shaping public opinion, the control of the government's actions (social control), etc. This is in part due to the weakening of the legitimacy and credibility of political parties as mechanisms of expression of citizen's demands (PNUD Bolivia, 2002:180).

Also, the role of the media in the local scope has been highlighted, since "they are necessary to generate encounters on the spatial dimension of the city, to understand and transmit conflicts and to guarantee political pluralism, to recognize cultural diversity, and to facilitate socioeconomic exchanges. Quality media make it easier for there to be citizenship and not just city; coexistence and not just multitudes; and a model of community life that goes beyond the mere exchange of flow of goods and services. This refers, without distinction, to massive and traditional media and those referred to as alternative media, community media, or citizen media (PNUD Colombia, 2008:283).

The idea is that the media should inform to incite citizens to thought or action, to "provoke political or social concern, that is, the inclination of mood by the exercise of power", and should help to find meaning in the facts and processes that affect people's lives as persons and as part of society. (PNUD Colombia 2008:284)

When the media works well and enjoys freedom of expression it can reveal injustices, prevent corruption, contribute to the construction of an active and participative citizenship, and reinforce social values. On the other hand, they can promote a passive citizenship related solely to consumption.

Alfaro considers that the media "are the contact point of citizens with their countries and the world". They allow the acquaintance of not only existent problems and conflicts, but they also reveal keys to know who is who and on which side of so many differences and conflicts they stand. Also, the interaction of the media and the daily life start defining a sense of future, dreams of change or a fatalist version of "nothing is possible" (Alfaro, 1993).

Freedom of the press, quality and informative pluralism should be part of the fundamental axes of work in countries with weak democracies, since the responsible exercise of the media would allow carrying out a monitoring of power and a visualization of the claims of the most vulnerable groups. The media bears a great power in the shaping of reality and of collective perceptions, be they positive or negative. The consensuses upon which democratic societies are built, are debated in the political arena and in the realm of the media.

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