Article

Unlearning Communication for Social Change—A Pedagogical Proposition

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Abstract: We have in recent years seen growing calls for pedagogies for social change amongst communication and development scholars, identifying resistances, critiques, and emerging practices in the field. This review article addresses this 'pedagogical turn', suggesting that it is in these pedagogies we can see the pathways to unlearn and relearn communication for social change. Offering a decolonial analytical lens, this article asks two questions: What characterizes these critical pedagogies? And how can the various pedagogies contribute to unlearning and relearning the field of communication and social change? This article is structured in five parts, first offering a review of key critiques articulated within the field of communication and social development in the past two decades, arguing that, in practice, what we are seeing is the organic development of a pluriverse of knowledges, values, and visions of society. Secondly, it proposes the decolonial term of 'unlearning' as a pedagogical pathway and epistemological ambition for the production and recognition of a pluriverse of knowledges, thereby challenging dominant perceptions of society and social change. Thirdly, it introduces a model of analysis which structures ways whereby we can think about monocultures and ecologies in relation to a range of dimensions of the pluriverse. Fourthly, it reviews key critical pedagogies, discussing how they address epistemic injustice both in broader societal contexts as well as in the university space. This article concludes by discussing how the process of unlearning through critical pedagogies has implications for the configuration and definition of the field of communication and social change, suggesting three areas for further research: ways of seeing (positionality), new subject positions (relationality), and new design processes (transition).

Keywords: communication for social change; pluriverse; decoloniality; pedagogy; unlearning

1. Introduction

In the past two decades, a growing body of knowledge has emerged that explores how to conceptualize the relation between communication, development, and social change. We have also seen an expansion of the field, from being a field only addressing practice within the so-called development sector, or international development cooperation, to also including the vast and well-established field of community development, and more recently, also including social movements and other spheres where social transformation occurs, and where communication plays a role.

We have seen an abundance of critique of the dominant paradigms in both development and social change as well as in communication, critiques pointing to the dominant approaches not doing justice to the development challenges they address and the communities whose livelihoods were at stake. Growing calls for other worldviews, other voices and positionalities from where to speak and influence these livelihoods have emerged. Calls for other ontologies and epistemologies have been heard, and other worlds have been imagined.

More recently, calls for other pedagogies have emerged. Critical pedagogies (Nutall and Mbembe 2008; Mignolo and Walsh 2018), pedagogies of seeing and feeling (Manyozo

2023), indigenous pedagogies (Herrera-Huerfano et al. 2023), anti-racist pedagogies (Gomes 2017; Dias 2022), and creative–critical pedagogies of hope (Schwittay 2021, 2023) have been called for, mostly within development and social change debates but also specific to the field of communication and social change (Dutta 2015; Villanueva 2018; Suzina and Tufte 2020; Zermeno et al. Forthcoming). These are calls for action but also calls for other learning processes and for the visibility and presence of other knowledge systems. As we know, Paulo Freire's centenary in 2021 sparked an abundance of celebrations and confirmed a strong contemporary interest in his works. Freire spoke of critical pedagogies as a liberating pathway to empowerment, conscientization, and social change already in the 1960s (Freire 2005b), and later he developed and redeveloped his work, framing it as pedagogy of hope, pedagogy of indignation, pedagogy of the city, of freedom, etc. (Freire 1993, 2000, 2004, 2005a). The increase in calls for other worldviews is closely connected to the renewed interest in Freirean pedagogy.

However, what do these calls for other pedagogies mean? Are we to teach differently? From a different subject position? Or is it about creating non-formal spaces of learning or about demands for epistemic justice? What is at stake when so many scholars in each their own way are calling for other pedagogies? The last two decades of critique can been seen as a process of unlearning the field, where philosophical foundations and dominant epistemologies are being questioned and redefined. The 'pedagogical turn' in communication for development and social change moves the field beyond the critiques of the dominant paradigm and towards the formulation of imagined futures, crafting the pathways to other worlds as pedagogical projects.

These pedagogies are not only about what is taught and how, be it in formal or non-formal settings, but equally about the strengthening of worldviews and cosmovisions, and about the knowledge that is being produced. These pedagogies claim other spaces, other ecologies of knowledge, where other voices, values, and practices can thrive in the pursuit of a variety of justices.

The growing attention to pedagogies of change also requires reflection upon the role of the catalyst of change. There is an implied 'we' in many of the proposals, being the teachers, development practitioners, academics, or activists. The proponents of other pedagogies are addressing both the formal learning environment like universities, but many are more concerned with broader societal ecologies of change.

This article focuses on introducing and discussing some of the pedagogies of social change that are currently transpiring. This article is structured in five parts. Firstly, I offer a brief review of some of the critiques articulated within the field of communication and social change in the past two decades, arguing that, in practice, what we are seeing is the organic development of a pluriverse of knowledges, values, and visions of society. Secondly, I explain how 'unlearning' is a pedagogical proposition, an epistemological ambition about producing and recognizing knowledge from different points of departure, thereby challenging established perceptions of society and reinterpreting society. Thirdly, I introduce a model of analysis developed by Herrera-Huerfano et al. (2023) and which structures ways whereby we can think about monocultures and ecologies in relation to a range of dimensions of the pluriverse. Fourthly, I present some of the proposed pedagogies and discuss how they are both connected to broader processes of social transformation as well as to a struggle for the decolonization of university curricula and for epistemic justice. Finally, I conclude by discussing how the processes of unlearning and developing pedagogies for social change have implications for the field of communication and social change.

2. Communication and Social Change—A Brief Retrospective

In the publication 'Communication for Social Change Anthology', which I co-edtied two decades ago, a narrative of 50 years of Communication for Social Change research and practice was chronicled. The book brought together a collection of over 200 articles and excerpts documenting the development of the field globally (Gumucio-Dagron and

Tufte 2005). The material brought forward many critiques of the dominant paradigm and its strong embeddedness in the modernization paradigm while at the same time illustrating a rich global production of alternatives, mainly from the global south, pointing towards the power structures, technological developments, cultural practices, and community initiatives that were evolving within what at the time was mostly known as the participatory paradigm.

In the time that has followed, we have witnessed the growing body of research offering critiques of the dominant paradigm. They include critiques of its narrow behaviour change focus (Waisbord 2001), development institutions not listening to the subjects of development (Quarry and Ramirez 2009), critiques of evaluation practices and the number frenzy associated with most widespread methods (Thomas 2014), a critique of the marginalization of the subaltern with the development of a culture-centered approach to communication and development (Dutta 2011), analysis of the privatization of funding to the development sector and its implications (Wilkins and Enghel 2013), critiques of the unjust development paradigm and its community consequences (Manyozo 2017), and a critique of the lack of attention to power dynamics, suggesting more deeply theorized attention to the spaces of power in development practice (Ewoh-Opu 2019). We have also seen calls for citizen perspectives and new subject positions in communication and social change (Tufte 2017), the de-westernization of communication (Waisbord 2019), and a call for the un-making of the field offering a more explicit critique of the underlying model of capitalism that informs the dynamics civil society operates within (Noske-Turner 2023).

In addressing current development challenges, we have seen growing calls for rethinking and complexifying the role of communication, for example in health communication (Obregon and Waisbord 2012), environmental communication (Van de Fliert 2014), and in peace-building (Baú 2016). As elaborations and redevelopments of the participatory paradigm, we have seen calls for alternative (Peruzzo 2022), popular (Suzina 2021), and community communication (Pavarala 2020; Paiva 2007). They have each in their way contributed to nuancing both the empirical breadth of the field—focusing less on the sector of international development and more on community-based initiatives—but also on questioning the epistemological foundations.

In synthesis, from the origins of the dominant paradigm in social-psychology and communication studies with origins in the US decades ago, and its competing participatory paradigm emerging primarily from the global south, the last two decades have unraveled a multitude of new voices and perspectives positioning communication and social change as an interdisciplinary field of research connected with anthropology, sociology, political science, cultural geography, public health, environmental studies, and media and communication studies. It has more firmly manifested itself as a praxis-oriented discipline navigating a diverse gamut of dynamics—power, culture, agency, communication—within the traditional development sector but equally within indigenous community development processes and within social movements.

We have over the past two decades seen a cumulative critique of many facets of the monoculture of development and social change and of the dominant paradigm of modernization within communication for development and social change. This critique has drawn our attention to both systemic challenges, political economy issues, power dynamics, and notions of subjectivity, as well as unveiling alternatives to be found within community communication, and popular and alternative communication.

It is, however, the growing calls for other ontologies and for epistemologies from the global south that are emerging with consistency, and that enable me to argue that we are seeing the organic development of a pluriversal approach to development and social change. Universalizing perspectives and claims, typically associated with monocultures of development, are being countered by a growing recognition that we are living in a pluriverse where many worldviews and knowledge systems co-exist. As I will argue in this article, it leads to far deeper critiques of structural inequalities, embedded in the legacies of coloniality and which profoundly influence the prospects of any imagined future.

We are furthermore seeing a growing recognition of what Anibal Quijano called the colonial matrix of power (Quijano 2000). This is a decolonial lens through which to interpret development and social change but also through which to understand communication. Quijano's matrix offers a way to understand how hegemony operates through a logic that configures economies, relations, and epistemes. While the Latin American attention to decoloniality has been growing, similar processes can be seen in Asia and Africa. In Asia, the way of articulating similar challenges has been through the lens of the subaltern (Spivak 1988), while in Africa, decolonization has been a keyword, tied back to the pan-African and non-aligned movements and the efforts of newly decolonized nations to find their space and collaborate, while more recent developments have had strong emphasis on intellectual decolonization (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018).

In the field of communication for development and social change, we saw early articulations of decolonial perspectives by, for example, Mohan Dutta (2015), offering an elaborate critique of the dominant paradigm in development communication and on that basis proposing three 'decolonial perspectives', emerging from subaltern perspectives and framed within his own culture-centered approach (CCA). The three perspectives are about listening, participation, and co-conversation. Other relevant and profound critiques drawing our attention to aspects of coloniality, imperialism, and patriarchy can be found in Villanueva (2018, 2022), Chasi (2021), Manyozo (2023), and in Wendy Willems' decolonial critique of Habermas's public sphere (Willems 2023). In this article, I will, however, highlight the work of Eliana Herrera-Huerfano who, in her doctoral dissertation (Herrera-Huerfano 2022), explored indigenous communication from communities in the Amazon, and who, together with Joan Pedro-Caranana and Juana Ochoa Almanza, developed an interesting heuristic framework, embedded in decolonial thinking, with which to explore communicative justice (Herrera-Huerfano et al. 2023). I will return to this shortly.

In the broader field of social science, scholars and activists have drawn our attention to feminist, anti-racist, and indigenous perspectives, most of these adding to the critique of the monoculture of development and offering significant contributions to a pluriverse of cosmovisions informing our understanding of society and social transformation. As Herrera-Huerfano et al. rightly state: 'The evolving perspective of the pluriverse is grounded in decolonial scholarship and comes from the practices that communities and social movements around the world are implementing to question the Modern hegemonic paradigm and improve the degrees of justice' (Herrera-Huerfano et al. 2023, p. 7). There are global trends, many localized and regional movements from the global south resisting the universalizing and dominant discourses.

A common denominator in the social science critique of development is the call for pedagogies, a variety of them, as a means to cultivate and operationalize a pathway forward, towards possible futures. We have seen a proliferation in very recent years of the use of pedagogical language. These calls for pedagogies for social change are also seen amongst communication scholars, identifying resistances, critiques, and emerging practices naming them as pedagogies for social change. It is this growing emphasis upon the pedagogies of social change that this article wishes to address, suggesting that it is in these pedagogies we can see a pathway to unlearn communication for social change. It is thus in the context of a growing decolonial scholarship positioned within the perspective of the pluriverse, and calling for pedagogies of social change, that this article asks two questions: how can we understand these calls, and how can the various pedagogies contribute to advancing the field of CFSC through the process of unlearning?

3. Unlearning through Dialogue of Knowledges

'Unlearning' is a pedagogical proposition that aims to challenge established perceptions of society by questioning them, leading to reinterpretations of society. It is an epistemological ambition about producing knowledge from a different point of departure. From a decolonial perspective, it is about what Mignolo coined as 'epistemological disobedience' (Mignolo 2009), critiquing the way we go about our field of study but not remaining

in the critique or expressing other worldviews but also formulating pathways to open up action in pursuit of these other worlds.

However, scholars speaking of pedagogies of change are differently positioned. There are those who conceive and develop pedagogies for application mainly within the academic institutions (Icaza 2022; Schwittay 2021). Others articulate a language of pedagogy affiliated more with approaches to knowledge production more broadly, and that are often connected with the struggles for recognition and inclusion of minority groups in society (Gomes 2022; Dias 2022; Herrera-Huerfano et al. 2023; Mbembe 2021).

'Unlearning' captures the broader defined critical pedagogical project emerging typically within feminist, anti-racist, or indigenous movements. Framed within decolonial frameworks, it emphasizes the power dynamics but also the historical processes of exclusion and oppression that inform these struggles for justice. These again are rooted in broader philosophical approaches to knowledge production, such as cognitive justice (Visvanathan 2021; Santos 2018) and epistemic justice (Fricker 2007). As will appear in the following examples, some key scholars, including bell hooks, Paulo Freire, Frantz Fanon, and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o have made strong calls for pedagogies of change.

However, prior to presenting and briefly analyzing some examples of pedagogies of change, I would like to introduce the mentioned model of analysis that Herrera-Huerfano et al. developed (Herrera-Huerfano et al. 2023). It offers a breakdown of how to approach a dialogue (Herrera-Huerfano et al. 2023, pp. 18–19) of knowledges from a decolonial approach in support of a strengthening of pluriversal approaches to society and social change. Their heuristic model serves as a useful point of departure to understand in more detail what 'the monoculture of development and social change' entails and how we can link this discussion with a further advancement of the epistemological grounding of communication for social change. The model (see Table 1) offers three analytical entry points: a breakdown of what the monoculture of the Modern Paradigm comprises, the ecologies that challenge them, and their relation with different forms of justice that the pluriverse requires for its existence and extension.

Table 1. Model of analysis: relations among monocultures, ecologies, and dimensions of the pluriverse.

MONOCULTURES	ECOLOGIES	DIMENSIONS OF THE PLURIVERSE
Monoculture of Modern knowledge	**Ecology of knowledges** Value of other knowledges and criteria of rigor that give contextual credibility to knowledge	**COGNITIVE JUSTICE**: Relational epistemologies/ontologies. Recognition of knowledges (popular, peasant, traditional, indigenous, practical knowledges)
Monoculture of the naturalization of differences	**Ecology of recognitions** Recognitions of social movements, social and cultural diversity, autonomy, emancipation and collective action	**SOCIOCULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL JUSTICE**: Communitarisms, communalisms, cooperation and solidarity, plurinational communities and states, peace, horizontal
Monoculture of globality/universality	**Ecology of trans-scales** Simultaneous recovery of tensions and articulations between the local and the global, as the community	(democratic) relations, self-management, unity within diversity, historical memory, cultural self-appreciation, interculturality, relations from the local to the global

Table 1. *Cont.*

MONOCULTURES	ECOLOGIES	DIMENSIONS OF THE PLURIVERSE
Monoculture of linear time	**Ecology of temporalities** Recover the sense of cycles, circular and radial time that are typical of biological processes and nature	**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**: Rethink the relationships of the human being with nature, human and non-human relationships, rights of nature, biocentrism, alternatives to development, ecological meta-citizenship
Monoculture of capitalist productivity	**Ecology of productivities** Recover and value alternative production systems that are carried out in popular economic organizations through self-management, cooperative organization, solidarity, and protection of the land and territory	**POLITICAL ECONOMY JUSTICE**: Self-sustainable economies, post-extractivism, solidarity economy, cooperatives, self-management, equality, the commons, the public, degrowth, post-development, de-marketisation, slowdown of consumption, autonomy
Monoculture of liberal democracy	**Ecology of demodiversity** Different models and practices of democracy, plurality of powers, and legalities	**SOCIOPOLITICAL JUSTICE**: New political subjects, legalities and powers, participatory spaces, popular experiences, assemblies, protest, plebiscites, communality, direct democracy
Monoculture of Modern communication	**Ecology of communication** Decentralizing understanding of communication to ensure the right to communication and diverse and egalitarian communication	**COMMUNICATIVE JUSTICE**: Recovery of different ways of thinking communication and communication studies, critique of colonial communication and mainstream media, subaltern communication, access, public policies, right to communication, democratization of mediations, representations, practices, technologies, and media systems

Herrera-Huerfano's model takes its point of departure in the work carried out at CES, at the University of Coimbra, more specifically in the ALICE project led by Boaventura de Sousa Santos. Bringing forth an analysis of the sociology of *absences*, the ALICE team propose a sociology of *emergences* which, viewed in the perspective of decolonization, aims at 'turning absences, nonexistence, or historical invisibilities into presences' (Herrera-Huerfano et al. 2023, p. 14). The model identifies seven monocultures. Five of the monocultures were offered by ALICE. Additionally, Herrera-Huerfano et al. have added the monoculture of liberal democracy and monoculture of Modern communication.

While the model does an excellent job in connecting the domains of critique with the spaces and aims of social change, I would argue that it is the pedagogical approach and practice that weaves the various dimensions together, addressing, for example, one or two of the monocultures operating within particular ecologies to achieve specific 'justices'. So, if we return to the pedagogies proposed by many of the communication and social change scholars mentioned in the brief review above, we can draw on this heuristic framework to discuss how the proposed pedagogies relate to development challenges. This article proposes the use of a decolonial pedagogical lens to articulate the spaces and develop practices in pursuit of justice.

4. Critical/Decolonial Pedagogies

In the book 'Decoloniality', which Katherine Walsh and Walter Mignolo wrote half of each (Mignolo and Walsh 2018), Walsh offers an insightful analysis of how she perceives decolonial pedagogies. She sees pedagogy as closely linked to social struggle. She draws clearly on Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, seeing the decolonial pedagogy as a methodology that is grounded in peoples' realities, subjectivities, histories, and struggles' (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, p. 88). The social struggles are thus for Walsh, as they were for Freire, pedagogical settings of learning, unlearning, relearning, reflection, and action.

While Walsh and many others draw actively on Freirean pedagogy, there are also scholars who flag the limitations of Freire. The fact that he was a scholar emerging within the Latin American Left after World War II with Marxist and humanist emancipatory paradigms guiding his thinking is, for some, problematic. Both the maori anthropologist Linda Tuhiwai Smith and the Native American intellectual Sandy Grande draw attention to some limitations of the applicability of his work in their contexts. Smith, according to Walsh, argues that his views 'worked to negate and obscure the methodological standpoints, practices and processes and approaches of feminist theorists of color, ethnic minorities, and indigenous people. This negation applies to the methodologies and/as pedagogies that derive from the lived experience of colonialism, racism and the struggles for self-determination and decolonization' (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, p. 89). In other words, Freire's liberating pedagogical praxis did not align with the realities experienced by some groups in society. Grande argued that Freire's theoretical formulations and assumptions remained Western, anthropocentric, and largely Marxist-informed, something she saw as a tension vis-a-vis indigenous knowledge and praxis (ibid.). These critiques partly reflect the strong inspiration that Freire rightly drew from Western philosophy but also the fact that he did not contemplate the diversity of lived experiences, nor the all-encompassing influence of the colonial matrix of power. Walsh, however, argues that much of Freire's thought remains relevant and a source of inspiration in both anti-racist and indigenous pedagogies. In the following, I present some of the social struggles that develop pedagogies for change. The examples are the Black Movement in Brazil and the broader indigenous movement. From there I move on to discussing scholars that contribute to what broadly has come to be known as decolonizing the curriculum.

5. Anti-Racist Pedagogies

The Black Movement in Brazil offers a first illustrative example of developing a pedagogy, in their case, an *anti-racist pedagogy* grounded in the practical experiences with fighting for the rights and recognition of black Brazilians, while at the same time being engaged with and connected to other movements and knowledge systems, like that of feminist movements and indigenous groups in Brazil. The Black Movement and their academic ambassadors make it clear how they are inspired by scholar-activists like bell hooks (1994), Boaventura de Souza Santos, and Paulo Freire (Gomes 2022; Dias 2022). For example, Nilma Lino Gomes, an emeritus anthropologist, who has researched and participated in the Black Movement in Brazil throughout her lifetime, has written a seminal book, 'O Movimento Negro Educador' (Gomes 2017). In this book, she articulates and she later rearticulates (2022) the pathways of learning and relearning through which many participants of the Black Movement in Brazil have passed. These are pedagogical processes emerging from an experience of the exclusion, racism, and marginalization of blacks in Brazil. Gomes draws on bell hooks' call for love in explaining how the encounter of many black Brazilians with the Black Movement is a process of relearning (or strictly reeducation, Gomes 2022, p. 21) which requires the consideration of love an action rather than a feeling: 'It's a way to make anyone who uses the word in this way automatically take responsibility and commitment (Gomes 2022, p. 20)'.

Such actions are not necessarily spectacular and linked to large movements or organizations but can happen almost unnoticed in the everyday. While referring to the group of colleagues who worked with her on assessing the role of the Black Movement in Brazil and publishing a book together about it (Gomes 2022), she describes their individual processes as 'A process marked by different places and forms of political, personal, pedagogical and academic interaction. Of the authors, some had the experience of having integrated the political struggle to combat racism in a more organic way, others were part of the new generation of black intellectuals formed in academia and by this movement. And all of them are learners of the knowledge constructed by the black Brazilian population over the centuries, systematized and socialized by the Black Movement (Gomes 2022, p. 21).

Like so many other black people engaged in the movement, they are learners, Gomes argues, learning from the knowledges constructed over centuries. These learning processes are processes of resignification and reinterpretation of what the Black Movement is for the collective but also for the individual. Many have engaged in these processes but not necessarily in some entity or organization but elsewhere in everyday life, as a form of everyday activism and learning (Gomes 2022, p. 26). Such timelines and temporalities are worth noting and considering when identifying epistemologies of groups engaged in communication for social change.

Similarly, Luciana de Oliveira Dias, in considering the condition of a black epistemology in the academic space in Brazil echoes the risk articulated by the renowned indigenous leader Ailton Krenak, in arguing for the risk of oppressing diversity and in calls for recognition and rights (Dias 2022, p. 133). Dias further unpacks many of the challenges for 'a claims-driven and anti-racist pedagogy'. She sees a black anthropology spearheading such a pedagogy.

In arguing for a black epistemology, and recognizing her inspiration in Freire's 'pedagogy of hope', Dias outlines a pathway for the reworlding of the claim-driven, anti-racist pedagogy she calls for towards the realization of a black anthropology. She argues for a practice-oriented pedagogy, that seeks its historical concreteness in practice, given that hope, as she argues, does not reside in pure waiting but 'in the engaged, contained, questioning and active critical/loving construction'. Dias' pedagogical outline requires representation, dialogic communication, a redistribution of power, and a pluriversal approach to epistemology (Dias 2022, p. 152). This proposal promotes a dialogue of knowledge, challenging various monocultures that impose limits and creating and supporting various ecologies in pursuit of justice.

6. Indigenous Knowledges and Pedagogies

As within the anti-racist movements, a plethora of movements that have been growing significantly in recent years are the indigenous movements. Indigenous groups across the globe are self-organizing, claiming rights to territory, resources, identities, and in multiple ways, defending indigenous cosmovisions, ways of life, and relations to the Earth. A prominent indigenous leader from the Amazon, Ailton Krenak spoke at the Centenary celebrations for Paulo Freire, organized by Loughborough University London in 2021, arguing against universalisms, or what he calls 'unity'. Krenak made a strong argument for a pluriversal approach to the world and for the recognition of diversity as a key premise in our society: 'if we continue (. . .) insisting on the production of equality between us, without being aware that this equality needs to be sown in the field of diversity, in the recognition of difference, in the possibility of radical difference, we will always find a turning on the path, which will return us to the same place' (Krenak 2022, p. 72).

Krenak calls further for a respectful and affectionate relation to Earth: 'This idea of civilization that needs to sweat to earn something from the Earth is an idea very close to the idea of a slave. We are not slaves to the Earth. We are children of the Earth. And children usually get food for free. This is affection. Affection is not just a word. Affection is an experience. Eating, drinking, dancing, singing, and lifting the sky is a pedagogy, so to speak, of the Earth with its children: Eat, drink, dance, sing and lift the sky (. . .) is an exercise in staying alive as a celebration of life' (Krenak 2022, p. 75).

An example of an indigenous pedagogy perspective is seen with the work of Gabrielle Lindstrom and Robert Weasel Head (Lindstrom and Head 2023). In the spirit of the renowned late indigenous scholar, Dr. Betty Bastien, who wrote about Blackfoot Resilience and indigenous pedagogy (Bastien 2016), Lindstrom and Weasel Head offer a personal reflection upon the ontological responsibility of indigenous communities, reflecting upon what an indigenous epistemology entails, for example the relational aspects to ancestors, recognizing the ancestors that have come before. They speak of life-long learning and indigenous resilience as a way of seeing, tied both to ancestral knowledge, but also to the importance of land for indigenous groups. Both Krenak, Bastien and Lindstrom and Weasel

Head speak about foundational features of indigenous thinking, which, despite the call for recognition of diversity speaks to inseparable and affectional, non extrationist relations with nature, the role of land, and other perceptions of social relations, time, and space. They speak about pedagogies of resilience and affection as pedagogy.

Within communication scholarship and practice, we can see a growing attention to indigenous worldviews and communication practices. Claudia Magallanes-Blanco (2022) refers to an encounter from 2018 of Mexican scholars—including indigenous communicators from different ethnic groups, facilitators of community processes, and socially committed academics—meeting to reflect upon their communication practices, revisiting the history of indigenous media and communication in Mexico, the role of indigenous communication practitioners inside and outside their communities, and their relationship with the stage, and, overall, exploring how to go about media and communication from an indigenous perspective. Many similar meetings have been occurring in-person but also online in recent years, and a rich debate has been unfolding across many countries in Latin America. It is a tendency that Herrera-Huerfano confirms in her PhD 'Communication Practices in Indigenous Peoples: Mediations of Culture and Local Development in the Colombian Amazon' (Herrera-Huerfano 2022) and in the joint piece with Amparo Cadavid Bringe and Jair Casanova-Vega (Herrera-Huerfano et al. 2024). As Magallanes clarifies, a lot of connections exist between discussions about indigenous communication with popular and community communication, and recent books offer insights into both region-specific Latin American experiences and debates (Suzina 2021) as well as broader global south experiences with the indigenous, alternative, and popular (Herrera-Huerfano et al. 2023). What this developing scholarship points to is a process of unlearning, or as Magallanes frames it:

> 'Community, Indigenous and popular communication, materialized in media outlets, messages and practices, is a school of life that generates an alternative model of education. This model allows us to re-educate ourselves and re-signify, with a critical sense, the symbolic and community elements that are substantive for life. It shows more dignified views of who we are based on our words, detaching us from the colonizing language' (Magallanes-Blanco 2022, p. 24)

This current growing visibility of indigenous communication connects with long-standing debates around indigeneity and decolonization. In 1986, the Kenyan author and academic, Ngungi W'a Thiong'o, wrote his seminal text about 'decolonizing the mind' (W'a Thing'o 1986). In it, he argues for decolonization in the humanities, in theatre, literature, and film. He decided from that point onwards to abandon writing in English, and chose to write in Swahili, despite having been educated in English throughout and had built this career and his authorship writing in English. There are clearly epistemic struggles going on and political stands articulated in these situations, reflecting challenges that have been recurrent in the struggles against colonialism and that reflect across many disciplines. Magallanes argues that pedagogical projects are also political. Pedagogically, they are offering an indigenous perspective—claiming novel starting points, indigenous cosmologies, voices, languages, temporalities, and communicative practices.

Tied more closely to the field of development, Linje Manyozo takes discussions about indigenous approaches a step further towards operationalization. In his book 'Development Practitioners in Action', he develops his thoughts about how to draw on Freire's critical pedagogy in working with both teaching 'development' and doing development in practice. In advocating a people's pedagogy (Manyozo 2023, p. 113), and an inclusive co-design process, he argues for what he calls 'indigenous intelligence' as fundamental to 'enable us to navigate the dangerous and slippery waters of deliberative development' (Manyozo 2023, p. 113). As a Chichewa-speaking Malawian, Manyozo draws on Chichewa notions such as 'kudziletza' in arguing for a pedagogy of listening that emphasizes forgiveness as a perspective. Kudziletza is a perspective or lifestyle that combines forgiveness with peaceful engagement and letting go (Manyozo 2023, p. 91). Manyozo sees Kudziletza as an epistemological framework and praxis where you 'refuse to resist evil', providing space,

in Freirean terms, for wrongdoers to conscientize. Still within Bantu experiences, he also suggests the Bantu notion of leadership, and others.

Following a key principle in Freire, who draws both on Marxism and Christianity in his pedagogy, Manyozo argues for the need to connect political and spiritual solidarity, a proposal that also resonates strongly with the proposals of theology of liberation from the 1960s and 1970s. It is, according to Manyozo, important for students and future development practitioners, to be able to read both the word *and* the world. However, while drawing heavily upon Freire's critical pedagogy, Manyozo is more explicit in acknowledging and drawing actively upon indigenous knowledge systems in the pedagogies of change he proposes.

7. Universities and Pedagogies for Social Change

In developing the field of communication and social change, the role of universities is crucial as a strategic space of knowledge production. Across the globe, universities are increasingly subjected to market logics, and academic models originating in the Global North. As Philip Altbach rightly argues, the university is increasingly transformed from a public good to a private good (Altbach in Santos et al. 2022). As Santos furthermore argues, the historical project of humanity is increasingly replaced by the closing of the mind, instrumentality in forms of teaching and learning, and with risk-averse pedagogies resulting in the closing down of creative and problem-based learning, and with critical thinking and reflection being increasingly difficult to cultivate. Walsh has, in this context, argued for the need to critically explore the cracks in Western Christian civilization (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, p. 82). It is in this context that pedagogies for social change in formal educational institutions are crucial.

In the context of development studies, Amber Murrey and Patricia Daley offer an important contribution in their book 'Learning Disobedience. Decolonizing Development Studies' (Murrey and Daley 2023). It is a provocative critique of development, and also a proposal to 'unlearn' development and promote reworlding. Murrey and Daley both work at Oxford University, offering a very reflexive approach as how to navigate decolonial perspectives in the context of such an elite university entangled into the legacies of colonialism and empire: 'disobedience in the colonial university requires both anti-colonial critique and decolonial imaginaries' (Murrey and Daley 2023, p. 11). They draw substantially on decolonial thought, from Quijano's colonial matrix of power over Nyamjoh's analysis of epistemic Eurocentrism to Ndlovu-Gatsheni's and Icaza's decolonial options for pluriversal and alternative epistemes (drawing on what Mignolo and Escobar have called 'decolonial options', Mignolo and Escobar 2010). Drawing furthermore on Mignolo's call for epistemic disobedience, and in pursuit of the knowledges and perspectives that should inform and shape international development policy and programming, Murrey and Daley propose developing a praxis that does four things: (1) Centres indigenous and decolonial ontologies and epistemologies; (2) Is purposefully oriented to abolition; (3) Critiques the role of coloniality in informing human/nature relations; and (4) Is place and land-based. Such a praxis results in a 'disobedient pedagogy' which they again structure around five elements: humility, unlearning, learning-in-place, a decolonial ethic, and attention to power (Murrey and Daley 2023, p. 11). Their proposal draws substantially upon their own teaching experience, operationalizing how to teach development through a decolonial lens—moving the, at times, quite vague calls for 'decolonizing the curriculum' into a very concrete space.

In the context of communication for social change, such pedagogies are equally necessary. In a recent paper, three Latin American colleagues and I have developed an argument for a 'Laboratory' as a pedagogy for social change (Zermeno et al. Forthcoming). It is based on principles emerging within the rich Latin American tradition of participatory communication and communication for social change over 6–7 decades. We distil from this experience a conception of change that is informed by horizontal dialogue, critical reflection, and constructive hope, and that strives to collaborate *with* communities—not *for* them— by means of liberating/emancipatory education and dialogic/alternative/participatory

communication. The Lab idea further emphasizes the integration of theory and practice (see Zermeno et al. for an elaboration of the Lab model and Tufte 2024 for an elaboration of emancipatory communication). The proposal essentially builds on three key components. One is the critical–creative pedagogical approach developed by Anke Schwittay (Schwittay 2021, 2023). The second comprises the epistemological and theoretical principles of epistemic and practice communities (Feldman et al. 2013). Finally, it draws heavily on the practical experiences accumulated in the Kaleidoscope Network, a network of primarily Latin American scholars in communication and education that have brought their experience to the table as input to a Lab model pedagogy for social change, suggesting this for a university context (Zermeno et al. Forthcoming). Below, I elaborate on the critical–creative pedagogy.

Anke Schwittay developed the critical–creative conceptual framework on the basis of her work with university students of international development in the UK and as a response to the challenges often encountered by students within neoliberal educational institutions. Schwittay often encountered students with visions and aspirations when entering university. They often lost these visions and got disillusioned in their process of learning. It was therefore of fundamental importance for Schwittay to develop a transformative pedagogy whereby the students could not only better understand the global challenges they faced but also could imagine alternative responses to them. Teaching 'critical hope' is at the core of Schwittay's pedagogical proposal, and she outlines four interconnected pathways in critical–creative pedagogy.

Whole-person learning is the first strand. It argues for the inclusion of student experiences into the educational process. Drawing on John Dewey, Schwittay argues for the inclusion of both body and mind in the learning process. For example, she asked students on her course Urban Futures to bring their personal experiences of living in Brighton, UK where her university is located, into the classroom and then work with their diaries, emotions, and critical reflections to discuss rights to the city and urban citizenship (Schwittay 2023). The second pathway, that of *Creative Methods*, draws, amongst others, on Augusto Boal's methods and theories around theatre. The key point here is to bring art practices into transformative education, something that, with Boal's Forum Theatre method, is a very participatory and inclusive practice. Linked closely is the third pathway, that of the *praxis orientation*, a core concept in Freire's liberating pedagogy. Again, the process of working with praxis is embedded in Schwittay's teaching, asking students to develop activism campaigns for causes of their choice based on workshops where they acquire relevant theoretical and practical knowledge to develop such campaigns. Finally, the fourth pathway is that of Critical Hope. This proposal aims to avoid unrealistic optimism, and it is equally grounded in Freire's notion of radical hope, and as Schwittay states: "This is hope that is reparative in addressing past injustices, active in materially engaging with contemporary challenges and future-oriented in seeking transformative action" (Schwittay 2023, p. 12).

This critical–creative pedagogy needs a generative theorizing that allows the pedagogies of possibility to grow. *Generative theorizing* assumes an experimental and open stance that seeks connections and collaborations, aims to consider rather than judge. It furthermore embraces the unexpected and celebrates surprises. It is interested in building rather than (only) deconstructing, and when it is articulated as a critical–creative pedagogy, it ensures that its critical element does not overwhelm its creative sibling (Schwittay 2021). Generative theorizing furthermore rethinks the meaning of the higher educator. As Schwittay argues, it may consequently 'require unlearning of traditional approaches to theorization, a reimagining of the educator, pursuing prefigurative pedagogical politics where we begin to enact in the here and now the transformative vision we have for the future (an affective process, linked to our personal assumptions, aspirations and anxieties)' (Schwittay 2021). With generativity, critique and care become building blocks towards an 'academic subject of possibility'. If we connect this to Herrera-Huerfano's model of analysis around dialogues of knowledge, generativity can be seen as the integration of as many of

the ecologies as possible, developing 'a way of seeing' linked with a critical subject position and a practical way ahead.

To complement the analysis of critical pedagogies for social change in the context of universities, let us turn to the three-pronged decolonial pedagogy proposed by Rosalba Icaza (Icaza 2022). Icaza is the first professor in decolonial studies at a Dutch university. During her inaugural lecture (June 2022), she outlined a framework that is guided by feminist, decolonial, praxical thinking and an ethics of relational accountability (Icaza 2022). Her feminist and decolonial perspectives are interwoven, strongly inspired by Maria Lugones. In speaking of praxical thinking, she referred to her constant search for pedagogical possibilities: 'the opening of minds, hearts, ears when listening'. Furthermore, Icaza mentioned the ethics of relational accountability, and looking at 'a space in academia that nurtures pluriversality'. Based on these sources and principles, she proposed a decolonial pedagogy organized in three dimensions: firstly, a *pedagogy of positionality*, which is about exposing knowledge in a situated manner, raising awareness around the geopolitical location of the knowledge that is shared in for example academic canons; secondly, *a pedagogy of relationality*, seeking transformations in the classroom; and thirdly, a *pedagogy of transition*, which is about developing teaching practices that seek to break the epistemic borders.

Like Icaza, Achille Mbembe argues for the decolonial/decolonization project as a project that expands our conceptual, methodological, and theoretical imaginary, and does so through a horizontal strategy of openness to dialogue among different epistemic traditions (Mbembe 2021, p. 79). Drawing on Enrique Dussel and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Mbembe critiques the dominant Eurocentric academic model that has extended to most corners of the planet. He does not discard universal knowledge, but it must develop through pluriversity, which are spaces that are open to epistemic diversity. In the African context, Mbembe argues, the decolonization of the academic space has to do with articulating four interconnected processes: (1) Changing curricula, syllabi, or content (mostly in humanities); (2) Changing the criteria for defining what texts are included in or excluded from the canon; (3) Changing student demographics while recruiting more black staff and transforming academic and administrative bodies; and (4) Recalibrating the activities of teaching and learning in such a way as to institute a different power relation between teachers and learners (Mbembe 2021, pp. 77–78).

When comparing the above reviewed five pedagogies for change—Murrey and Daley, Zermeno et al., Schwittay, Icaza, and Mbembe—there are many overlapping features as to what constitutes a pedagogy that can both engage critically with society, be inclusive and open to dialogue, can challenges the academic canons, and that is attentive to the actual learning process. On the basis of this brief review, I see Icaza's argument for positionality, relationality, and transition as a generic conceptual framing that encompasses the full process of learning, unlearning, relearning, reflection, and action. It offers a pedagogical steer as how to counter specific monocultures, how to navigate within the ecologies you aspire for, and help guide your struggle for particular justices. While it is unlikely to target more than a few of the identified monocultures and ecologies that are in Herrera-Herfano et al.'s model of analysis, a pedagogy of social change along the lines of Icaza's three-pronged lens is a useful process-articulating approach that furthermore can integrate theory with practice.

While Herrera-Huerfano et al.'s model of analysis offer a general and all-encompassing mapping of problems (monocultures), spaces of opportunity (ecologies), and aims (justices), Icaza's decolonial pedagogy points us a step further to drawing up strategies for change, operationalized as pedagogies of positionality, relationality, and transition.

8. Implications for Communication and Social Change

Pedagogies of positionality, relationality, and transition constitute pathways in the unlearning and relearning withing the field of communication and social change. It is a way of organizing not only the critiques and limitations within communication for social change, as reviewed in the beginning of this chapter, but they suggest pathways towards

other imagined futures. They constitute an epistemological positioning, allowing for new knowledge to be produced and for communication for social change to be addressed through a decolonial lens.

The question is of course what implications this will have, both for the research and practice. The model by Herrera-Huerfano et al. remains a useful heuristic approach, a model of analysis that identifies a number of interconnected monocultures and some key ecologies where dialogues of knowledge can thrive, and similarly identifies a number of justices—cognitive, communicative, socio-political, environmental, etc.—that correspond to different dimensions of the pluriverse that potentially are addressed through the dialogues of knowledge. In moving this analysis a step further, I propose three focus areas as priorities we must address in supporting the processes of unlearning and relearning in communication and social change research and practice.

9. Ways of Seeing (Positionality)

Firstly, 'Ways of Seeing' is about exposing knowledge in a situated manner, raising awareness around the geopolitical location of the knowledge that is shared in, for example, academic canons on communication but also canons of communicative practice. How communication is perceived, implemented, and evaluated depends upon our positionality and thus our ways of seeing. Back in 2005, in writing the introduction to the 'Communication for Social Change Anthology' (Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte 2005) we spoke about the roots and routes of the field, and the need to unpack these to understand the past and present and strengthen the pathways to the future. Similarly, Bhambra makes the argument that there are roots and routes that form your way of seeing and being (Bhambra 2020). A key example of how important this is can be taken from Herrera-Huerfano's own work within indigenous communication. She suggests what she calls 'communicacion propria' (translated as 'originative communication' in (Herrera-Huerfano et al. 2024)). It clarifies how, from an indigenous worldview, there are indigenous positions that inform public policy in support of indigenous communication. This indigenous proposal, which is further elaborated in Herrera-Huerfano et al. (2024), offers concrete pathways ahead.

10. New Subject Positions/Subjectivities (Relationality)

The second point is about acknowledging and strengthening the subject positions and relational structures within the spaces where learning, or conscientization, unfolds. This space, or ecology, can be a classroom or it can be any community space. Exploring and understanding these dynamics and recognizing and supporting the diversity of subject positions is what both Schwittay, in her critical–creative pedagogy, her pedagogy of hope, but also what Zermeno et al. in their Lab pedagogy for social change are working with. While enhancing the subject positions of collectives that influence change processes is key, it is also important to understand individual subjectivities and their relation to these collective processes of change. This is what I am currently undertaking in a research project exploring trajectories of activism. Scholars like Chantal Mouffe, Michel Foucault, and Engin Isin help us understand that agency is something that happens not only in the spikes of collective uprisings and in protest, but it also goes on in the everyday. For us, it is crucial to understand the dynamics and the role of communication herein.

11. New Design Processes (Transition)

Third and finally, new design processes are about developing pedagogical practices that seek to break the epistemic borders. Escobar's longstanding work, and not least his book 'Designs for the Pluriverse. Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds' (Escobar 2017), offers us a foundation that emerges from a recognition of the pluriverse, which is oriented towards communities and their processes of transformation, and which is attentive to the design of these processes. It includes attention to changing ecologies, or communing and reworlding, as key design categories that help us conceptualize and implement transformative design processes (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2023). It is about

building a commons where the reworlding can happen. Manyozo's work with development practitioners and attention to design is a very concrete and relevant example of how this can unfold (Manyozo 2023).

12. Final Remarks

For Ngugi w'a Thiong'o, the decolonization project consisted primarily of critiquing the colonial knowledge chain (W'a Thing'o 1986) while Fanon spoke about provincializing Europe, turning our backs on Europe, and not taking Europe as a model. Decolonization, by these pioneering thinkers, was first and foremost a discipline, a process of getting to own oneself. It was, Fanon argued, also a pedagogy to teach the colonized through what kind of praxis he or she could liberate himself or herself (Fanon in Mbembe 2021, p. 54).

By recognizing such legacies in the struggles of 'getting to own oneself' as Fanon called it, the field of communication and social change is faced by challenges that transcend communication and are more about the underlying structures and processes of change. Hence, a decolonial perspective upon communication and social change requires engagement in the broader process of unlearning and relearning. Mbembe, who is Camerounian, living in South Africa, makes reference to how Latin Americans have fought back against the dominant Eurocentric academic model by both struggling against the epistemic coloniality and by rehabilitating the defeated, subaltern, or indigenous knowledges and life-worlds (Mbembe 2021, p. 59). We have seen an abundance of experience in Latin America—two examples of this are the Black Movement in Brazil and its call for anti-racist pedagogies, and the indigenous movements and their calls for indigenous pedagogies. We are currently seeing many other examples emerge elsewhere on the globe. The field of communication and social change is being substantially influenced by such movements and finds itself today in a process of unlearning. This article has unpacked this process. Now, emerging processes of relearning and re-centering are beginning to show more visible, articulated contours of other centres of knowledge production. Looking ahead, we will need more and deeper explorations into the contemporary experiences of other ways of seeing, being, and taking action.

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