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PAULO FREIRE: POSSIBILITIES FOR DIALOGIC COMMUNICATION IN A MARKET-DRIVEN INFORMATION AGE

J. P. Singh ^a

^a Communication, Culture and Technology, Georgetown University, 3520 Prospect St, Washington, NW, 20009, USA E-mail:

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J. P. Singh

PAULO FREIRE: POSSIBILITIES FOR DIALOGIC COMMUNICATION IN A MARKET-DRIVEN INFORMATION AGE

This essay examines the legacy and challenges of Paulo Freire's ideas for a world abounding in information and communication or, in the case in this essay, representational technologies. Will these technologies help foster possibilities of emancipatory articulation or further the voiceless oppression of the marginalized? Can they do so outside the context of a radical struggle? The unorthodox argument in this essay leans toward emancipatory possibilities within a market-driven information age, albeit where these technologies help to foster dialogues and the interlocutors comprehend the implications of technology. A brief intellectual biography of Freire provides the praxis of his ideas: it emphasizes the development context of Freire's work and the way his activism intersected with his intellectual reflections. Next, Freire's ideas regarding dialogic communication, a call to social action, are presented. The essay then explores the implications of Freire's work within the context of two reference points rooted in communication technologies: representational technologies in general are examined followed by a discussion of the Internet. A concluding critique highlights shortcomings in the Freire influenced participatory action research (PAR) and argues against an a priori dismissal of markets.

Keywords Dialogic communication; Paulo Freire; communication technologies; post-colonial narratives

To be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world.
(Freire 1965/2005, p. 3)

In order for the oppressed to be able to wage a struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform.
(Freire 2000/1970, p. 49)

His pedagogy, which posits the central category of *dialogue*, entails that recovering the voice of the oppressed is the fundamental condition for human emancipation.

(Aronowitz 1993, p. 18)

Paulo Freire (1921–97), the educator, was foremost a progressive humanist. He understood the conditions of oppression and emancipation from a vantage point of love for humanity and faith in the ability of the downtrodden to find a voice to rise above their abject circumstances, which were consistently reproduced through patterns of ownership understood materially and subjectively (a sadomasochistic master-slave relationship that Freire outlined). Nevertheless, he wanted to be remembered as a ‘man who loved, who could not understand a life existence without love and without knowing. Paulo Freire lived, loved and he tried to know’ (quoted in Mayo 2004, p. 3). The necessary condition for finding a representational voice in order to understand and name one’s world was dialogue. Freire’s pedagogy, therefore, articulates a world in which the meaning of existence, that of humans and their surroundings, arises from a set of conversational interactions or dialogues, which allow human beings first and foremost to question the story being narrated about them and the one that they might narrate themselves. Herein lies his legacy and challenge for a world abounding in information and communication or, as is the case in this essay, representational technologies: Will these technologies help foster possibilities of emancipatory articulation or further the voiceless oppression of the marginalized? Can they do so outside the context of a radical struggle? In other words, to what extent do communication technologies open up the possibilities of non-oppressive narratives outside the context of radical politics?¹ The unorthodox argument in this essay leans toward emancipatory possibilities with the caveat that these technologies must help to foster dialogues where the interlocutors comprehend the implications of technology. Freire’s explicit thoughts about information technologies in his later work *Pedagogy of the Heart* are instructive:

In light of the existing domination over information, of the ease with which it is managed by and communicated to the network of power, it is not difficult to imagine the difficulties faced by those operating at the extremities of the circuit. How limited is the power of those, for example, working in the soybean fields of Brazil, who can hardly imagine that the possibilities of their production are known with long notice at the Chicago stock exchange.

(Freire 1997, p. 57)

This essay seeks to provide a reading of Freire that situates his intellectual legacy in democratic politics to which Freire himself graduated toward the end of his life, especially as in January 1989 when he assumed the post of the Secretary

of Education for Sao Paulo. This neither negates nor dismisses the radical position that Freire embodied most of his life but it does build upon the kinds of 'border-crossings' his work and life facilitated: 'It is to Freire's credit as a critical educator and cultural worker that he has always been extremely conscious about the intentions, goals, and effects of crossing borders and how such movements offer the opportunity for new subject positions, identities, and social relations that can produce resistance and relief from structures of domination and equality' (Giroux 1993, p. 180). Henry Giroux reads Freire as someone whose only home was a state of homelessness but nevertheless aligns himself with the radical and progressive elements in Freire's work. In crossing-borders to examine Freire in a non-radical context, this essay seeks to strengthen the links with and contributions of Freire's work to dialogic communication in general and, therein, the role of story-telling. The essay seeks to critique and expand, not appropriate, the scope of Freire's thought. It also challenges scholars studying the impact of information and communication technologies to think broadly about the new and old possibilities of representation and story-telling that are essential to understanding Freire.

This is *not* a comprehensive essay touching upon every important aspect of Freire's work and practice. Instead its intent is to examine the possibilities of dialogic communication in the context of representational communication technologies and non-radical practices. The main text reviewed here is Freire's seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which at the time of its 30th anniversary edition in 2000 had sold over 750,000 copies worldwide. This text is taken as an exemplar though, where applicable, its ideas are explored with reference to other scholars from whom Freire drew inspiration and also with reference to the precedent his own texts set for thinking about dialogic communication, especially in the development context of marginalized human beings. Dialogues are thus taken to represent critical practices, especially those directed at questioning the position assigned ideationally and materially to the marginalized within a particular social order.

The next section provides a brief intellectual biography for Freire in order to provide the praxis of his ideas. It emphasizes the development context of Freire's work and the way his activism intersected with his intellectual reflections. The second section develops Freire's ideas regarding dialogic communication. The third section explores the implications of Freire's work within the context of two reference points rooted in communication technologies: representational communication technologies in general are examined followed by a discussion of the Internet. Rather than positing Internet as a bold new device offering endless representational possibilities to the marginalized, the essay places the Internet itself in the kinds of representational possibilities historically that communication technologies afford the marginalized. The last sub-section is the most critical in examining the implications of dialogic communication with respect to the development paradigm it fostered, participatory action research (PAR), and

the context of markets within which most development interventions take place. This essay seeks to show that markets, fostering socially embedded economic transactions, can be and should be distinguished from neo-liberal ideologies that legitimize a particular view of institutional capitalism.

Despite the move toward democratic politics, Freire remained opposed to both markets and neo-liberalism whose nihilistic advance, in his mind, was a focus on 'production without any preoccupation about what we are producing, who it benefits, or who it hurts' (quoted in Mayo 2005, p. 180).² In not seeking a dismantling of market driven production, this essay shows that the oppressed *can* consciously participate in production, even through market means. Used critically and attended by democracy, 'freedom from fear' in a phrase Freire borrowed from Erich Fromm, communication technologies, within or outside of market driven contexts, can help the marginalized name their world, which Freire's pedagogy took to be the end of lived experiences. It is then that the soybean producers in Brazil, identified above in the direct quote from Freire, can dialogue directly with the stockbrokers in Chicago.

Freire's praxis

A call to social action, rooted in dialogic action, is the legacy of Freire's life examined here. Freire understands dialogues as conversations fostered in a spirit of enquiry that allow the participants to not only comprehend and delineate their world but also to transform it. Such comprehension can come only if people find a cultural voice to tell their own story through a process of dialogue. Here dialogues and the pedagogy underlying them are to be understood in a broad sense of a philosophy of life. Not surprisingly Freire's lived experience and its story – intellectually, spiritually, and physically – informs his oeuvre and its implications.

A development practitioner

Freire's pedagogic interventions developed early on in the context of 'post-colonial' development with efforts aimed at modernization including that of education in enhancing the communicative and aspirational capacities of human beings. As an educator, Freire appreciated the sincerity and import of such efforts, but found them to be Eurocentric and, more importantly, considered them to be simplistic and too technical.

Born in Recife, the Capital of Pernambuco, Brazil, in 1921, Paulo Reglus Neves Freire's intellectual life was shaped by the early years of Brazil's efforts with economic modernization, which chiefly equated socio-economic development with industrialization. This was especially so in the post World War II era when Brazil delved into import substitution industrialization, efforts to

boost domestic industrialization to curtail import dependence, ironically inviting foreign capital into Brazil to undertake 'domestic industrialization.'³ Just as core centers of industrialization developed in Brazil, other regions including Pernambuco would remain removed; these areas would foment progressive social movements, which form the context of Freire's ideas in the 1950s. In particular, rural areas were not only isolated from efforts to modernize but their populace, mostly illiterate with rates as high as 90 per cent, understood little of democratic politics. Paulo Freire's early efforts at literacy, first as a school teacher and subsequently as a Director at the Department of Education and Culture in the state of Pernambuco, were directed at the peasantry: 'Our verbal culture corresponds to our inadequacy of dialogue, investigation, and research. As a matter of fact, I am increasingly convinced that the roots of Brazilian taste for speeches, for 'easy' words, for a well-tuned phrase, lie in our lack of democratic experience' (Freire 1965/2005, p. 33). Apart from his exposure to the radical and socially progressive movements, Freire studied phenomenology, psychology and law. In 1959, Freire presented his PhD dissertation at the University of Recife, which provided the basis of his first well-known book, *Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1965/2005).⁴

Freire's intellectual ideas developed most notably after the foundation of the Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB) in July 1955, where notable Brazilian intellectuals gathered to fashion a Brazilian view of development: 'Until the formation of ISEB, the point of reference for the majority of Brazilian intellectuals was Brazil as an object of European or North American thought. . . . To think of Brazil as a subject was to identify oneself with Brazil as it really was. . . . It was no accident that ISEB, although it was not a university, spoke to and was heard by an entire university generation and, although, it was not a workers' organization, gave conferences in trade unions' (Freire 1965/2005, pp. 34–35). At ISEB, Freire interacted with Brazilian intellectuals, who came to be known as Isebian, such as Alvaro Vieira Pinto. The latter, in particular, shaped Freire's ideas regarding the development of a 'critical consciousness' 'to overcome the situations which limit them: the "limit-situations"' (Freire 2000/1970, p. 99). This thinking materialized most effectively in the literacy programs Freire used among Pernambuco sugarcane farmers who learned to read and write and also begin to comprehend their reality through processes of dialogues.⁵

Freire's literacy programs were also infused with the idea of Christian love understood in the agape sense of positive feelings for human beings. Freire's first wife, intellectual companion, and fellow teacher Elsa Maria Costa Oliveira is also important in understanding this aspect of Freire's praxis. She was a member of the Catholic Action Movement and her involvement paralleled the presence of the notion of Christian love in Freire's pedagogy. The Christian praxis also connected with the rise of such progressive thinking throughout Latin America. Freire's contribution to the rise of the socially progressive Catholic

movement Liberation Theology is especially important. Freire scholar Carlos Alberto Torres finds similarities between *Education as a Practice of Freedom* and the education section of the Final Documents of Medellín that resulted from the regional assembly of Bishops convened there in 1968 (Torres 1993, p. 122). He also notes that Freire's ideas of education resonated with the Catholic Bishop's Conference in 1963.

After the military coup in Brazil in 1964, Freire was imprisoned for 70 days and then spent 16 years in exile until his eventual return to Brazil in 1980. The military dictatorship labeled Freire to be a subversive communist and his teachings deemed heretical to that of Christ and Brazil (Scatamburlo-D'Anibale *et al.* 2006). During the exile Freire spent time in Chile until 1969 where he published his revised dissertation as *Education as the Practice for Freedom*. It was during the Chile years that Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published in Portuguese in 1968 and in English and Spanish in 1970. The publication and reception of these works as well his fieldwork resulted in an invitation from Harvard as Visiting Professor in 1969 for a year. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was widely read and influenced scores of scholars and social movements throughout the developing world. Notes Donalddo Macedo, a prominent Freire associate and scholar, about his first encounter with this work, as a student from Cape Verde in the United States: 'Reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* gave me a language to critically understand the tensions, contradictions, fears, doubts, hopes, and 'deferred' dreams that are part and parcel of living a borrowed and colonized cultural existence' (Macedo 2000, p.11).

In 1970, Freire moved to Geneva to work as an education advisor to the World Council of Churches. The position allowed him to extend his work to other parts of the world, initially in 1970 at the Institute of Adult Education at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, but more expansively and notably later in Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, and Sao Tome and Principe. Until then, African education had served to create petty officials for the colonial government. Freire countered this approach by connecting 'education with productive work, avoiding full-time students and combining study time with working hours in intimate relationship with peasants' (Torres 1993, p. 129). However, the Guinea-Bissau program also pointed to the limits of Freire's approach that was fast becoming controversial as an alternative way of acquiring literacy. Torres cites an estimate in 1980 showing that of the 26,000 students none became functionally literate in Guinea Bissau (Torres 1993, p. 133). Freire later defended his position by noting the political reality of the country and the use of formal Portuguese as the language of instruction.

Freire returned to Brazil in 1980 taking up a position at the Catholic University of Sao Paulo and also working with the founders of the socialist leaning Workers' Party (PT) on its Commission of Education (the current President Lula Inacio da Silva is from this party and one its founding

members). In 1989, when the party won elections in Sao Paulo, Freire became the city's Secretary of Education. The return to Brazil is also intellectually significant for two reasons. First, while remaining steadfast to the process of dialogic education, Freire began to note explicitly in the mid-1980s that the teacher and student are not on equal footing: 'At the moment the teacher begins the dialogue, he or she knows a great deal, first in terms of knowledge and second in terms of the horizon that he or she wants to get to' (quoted in Mayo 2005, p. 170 from Shor & Freire 1987, p. 103). He then began to acknowledge that the teacher did embody both knowledge and authority, in fact eschewing the term 'facilitator' for teacher for this same reason. He also accorded the authority to the teacher in initiating a dialogue and distinguishing it from babbling. 'To dialogue is not to babble. That is why there may be dialogue in a professor's critical, rigorously methodical exposition, to which the learners' listen as if *to eat up* the discourse, but also to understand its intellection' (Freire 1997, p. 99). Second, Freire shifted more in favor of democratic rather revolutionary discourse (Aronowitz 1993, p. 20). To be sure, Freire even in the 1950s had not advocated armed rebellion but neither did he express the belief that the oppressed classes could gain through democratic means. With the rise of the Workers' Party in Brazil and his own role within it, Freire expressed a pragmatic approach, which arguably had been part of his pedagogy anyway. He even took account of the new social movements including environmentalist, gender, and homosexual causes to note: 'It is my opinion today that either the revolutionary parties will work more closely with these movements and so prove their authenticity within them – and to do that they must rethink their understanding of their party, which is tied up with their traditional practice – or they will be lost' (quoted in Aronowitz 1993, p. 22).

Throughout his life, Freire remained humanistic in his approach drawing upon love and humility to provide a politics of hope and transformation. Nor did he think that the process of learning through dialogues ever ends. Writing at the age of 75 in *Pedagogy of the Heart*, widely believed to be the reflections upon his return to Brazil, he notes: 'The search for knowledge should never make us tired, and the acquisition of it should never make us immobile and satisfied.' His second wife Ana Maria Araujo Friere – Nita – writing after his death in May 1997 concludes her *Chronicles of Love* dealing with Freire's life with the following words: 'I have spoken here about the person who passionately lived every moment of his life. He would fight, argue, feel, discuss, love, and give all of himself' (Ana Freire 2001, p. 165). Freire himself concludes his last book *Pedagogy of Indignation* with the following sentence: 'No matter what society we may be in, or what society we may belong to, it is urgent that we fight with hope and fearlessness' (Freire 2004, p. 122).

Paulo Freire's life clearly speaks to the praxis, consciousness awakening, and the dialogic discourses that remain the hallmark of his thinking. His life is especially important to understanding the quality and salience of praxis in his

ideas. Nevertheless, there were strong intellectual antecedents and parallels in his work with other intellectual ideas to which this essay turns next.

Dialogic communication

Freire's pedagogy is rooted in the capacity of human beings to learn through dialectical reasoning that forms the basis of dialogues. The etymologies of the words pedagogy and dialogues, although somewhat literal, are instructive in underscoring the philosophical interventions, rather than methodological techniques as sometimes misunderstood, that Freire sought. The term pedagogy comes from Greek *pais* or child and *ago* to lead, which, according to Macedo illustrates that 'education is inherently directive and must always be transformative' (Macedo 2000, p. 25). Stewart et al emphasize the making of meaning inherent in *dia* meaning through and *logos* or meaning (Stewart et al. 2004, p. 34). Taken together, the pedagogy of dialogic education would connote leading people in finding meanings for themselves.

In forming the basis of education, for Freire dialogues upset teacher-student relations. Teachers structure dialogues, as did Socrates and Plato, to help students problem-solve through dialectical reasoning. This differs from banking education where the expert teacher lectures and deposit ideas with students and the latter learn through memorization. In problem-posing education, where the world is presented a set of problems rather than solutions to be memorized and performed, the teacher-student relationship grows in such a way that both learn from each other: 'people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation' (Freire 2000/1970, p. 83). As noted above, later in life, Freire modified this stance to accord some authority to the teacher in setting the framework for dialogues.

Freire's emphasis on dialogues in the context of post-colonial communications is prescient. Dialogues presuppose that any utterance anticipates other utterances. Understood in the interpretive sense, dialogues form the basis of identity or self-realization.⁶ Although he was drawing upon ideas that can be traced back to Plato, communication studies in the Western world did not start to pay attention to dialogues systematically until quite recently. For example, the Foreword to a 2004 volume on dialogues noted that the book 'is unique in being the first collection of original essays on the theory and praxis of dialogue in the broad field of communication studies' (Wood 2004).

Freire's holistic conceptualization of dialogues synthesizes a variety of approaches. In this essay that speaks of Freire as a key information age thinker, it is far more important to discuss the implications of his approach rather than delineate its antecedents in detail. Nevertheless a simple accounting

does show the breadth of Freire's perspective. Mayo (2004, p. 5) mentions that the 'Marxist-humanist element is pervasive in Freire's work, which is, however, often judged to be eclectic in that it draws on a broad range of writings, including the work of Leszek Kolakowski, Karel Kosik, Eric Fromm, Antonio Gramsci, Karl Mannheim, Jean Paul Sartre, Herbert Marcuse, Pierre Furter, Mao, Che Guevara, Franz Fanon, Albert Memmi, John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, Amilcar Cabral, Martin Buber, Teilhard de Chardin, Jacques Maritain, Karl Jaspers, the Christian Personalism theory of Emanuel Mounier, and Titian de Atiade . . . and the 'secular, dialogical hermeneutics of Eduardo Nicol. . . The list is not exhaustive.'

A few elements of Freire's approach may now be described. A useful place to start is Freire's holism, often likened to that of the philosopher Martin Buber. His important work *I and Thou* (1970) argues that I-thou exists as a unity and that the idea of self is a relational phenomenon. Interestingly, the term dialogue does not feature in Buber's work but listening does (Anderson *et al.* 2004, chapter 1). Freire takes this holism in two directions. The I–thou relationship can get perverted in a pathological way where the self derives its identity in a state of oppression, which he conceptualizes in Freudian sado-masochistic terms. Freire's ideas about sadism are, however, more directly connected with Erich Fromm whom he cites in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

The pleasure of complete domination over another person (or other animate creature) is the very essence of the sadistic drive. Another way of formulating the same thought is to say that the aim of sadism is to transform a man into a thing, something animate into something inanimate, since by complete and absolute control the living loses one essential quality of life – freedom.

(Fromm 1966, p. 32 quoted in Freire 2000/1970, p. 59)

The second direction for the I–thou relationship is in dialogic communication where love and humility, rather than sadism, inform the interlocutors:

Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination. Domination reveals the pathology of love: sadism is the dominator and masochism in the dominated. Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause – the cause of liberation. And, this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical.

(Freire 2000/1970, p. 89)

Oppression, domination, and freedom are here understood in material as well as psychological ways; Freire is as aware of class in the Hegelian-Marxian sense as he is of consciousness in the ideological and psychological sense, which connects his thinking with that of Gramsci, Fanon, and Fromm. Freire makes at least 33 references to social class in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Mayo 2004, p. 7). Alienation, both materially and subjectively, from the means of production thus constitute the foundation of his analysis. However, the process of understanding what this life situation means and the process of transforming it lies in consciousness awakening or *conscientização*. This concept speaks to the development of a critical consciousness for which, in Fromm's words, a freedom from fear, is important.⁷ *Conscientização* introduces subjects to critically analyze their world through a process of dialectical coding and decoding. The investigator here is the anthropologist – in fact, Freire makes several references to the anthropological concept of culture – who must first apprehend any living situations and its contradictions. Next the investigator selects some themes for codifications (which can take visual forms such as sketches and photographs, or even auditory or tactile clues) or subjects' reality. These codifications must be easily recognizable by the individuals who live these circumstances. Through dialogic conversation, the investigator then helps the participants de-code the contradictions of the limiting situation when they begin to see themselves in it:

In the process of decoding, the participants externalize their thematics and thereby make explicit their 'real consciousness' of the world. As they do this, they begin to see how they themselves acted while actually experiencing the situation they are now analyzing, and thus reach a 'a perception of their previous perception.' By achieving this awareness, they come to perceive reality differently; by broadening the horizon of their perception, they discover more easily in their 'background awareness' the dialectical relations between the two dimensions of reality.

(Freire 2000/1970, p. 115)

Freire goes on to note that '*conscientização* does not stop at the level of their subjective perception of the situation, but through action prepares men for the struggle against the obstacles to their humanization' (Freire 2000/1970, p. 119). Despite continual debates on the type of revolution Freire envisaged, there is no doubt that to him revolutions cannot begin without dialogues: Freire in fact is ultimately suggesting a theory of cultural action rooted in communication: 'Dialogue with the people is radically necessary to every authentic revolution. This is what makes it a revolution, as distinguished from a military *coup*' (Freire 2000/1970, p. 128). He returns to the Christian notion of a communion, as did Che Guevara whom he acknowledges, in speaking of revolution: 'In this theory of action one cannot peak of an *actor*, nor simply of *actors*, but rather of *actors in intercommunication*' (Freire 2000/1970, p. 129). In conceiving

a non-oppressive world, he eventually returns to the I–thou in Buber to note the following:

The *I* and the *thou* thus become, in the dialectic of these relationships, two *thous* which become two *I*'s.

The dialogical theory of action does not involve a subject, who dominates by virtue of conquest, and a dominated object. Instead, there are Subjects who meet to *name* the world in order to transform it.

(Freire 2000/1970, p. 167)

Freire's emphasis on the way the subject apprehends reality by bringing his or her own lived experience to the classroom and then understanding it through successive sociological interactions has led some scholars to label him the 'Latin John Dewey'. Like Dewey, the process of dialectical dialogic reasoning produces a coherent notion of the subject rather than its anti-thesis.⁸ In the process of becoming, individuals begin to name the world. Thus, the narrative Freire presents despite its dialectical origins is linear in building upon its precedents and presents a unified notion of the human subject.

Communication technologies

Freire's view of technology is dependent on its meaning on the social context, rather than instrumental, which usually points to particular outcomes regardless of the social context. Furthermore, in his view technology must be understood in the representational possibilities that it can offer. For example, in the process of coding and decoding, auditory and visual technologies can re-present the world to people as a problem that can help the oppressed overcome their circumstances (Freire 2000/1970, p. 109). Alternatively, science and technology can be an instrument for the oppressors 'to reduce the oppressed to the status of "things".' (p. 133). This sub-section surveys communication technologies from oral and written story-telling to electronic communication to note instances where dialogic communication takes place. In doing so, it goes beyond the context of their use in a teacher-student situation that Freire conceived. Freire himself thought of his pedagogy in a broader context and thus its extension to the issues described below would be consistent with his approach.

Technologies of representation

Central to dialogic communication is the ability of the oppressed to name their world. This capability results from critical thinking following a series of codings and decodings, which allow the oppressed to understand their limit situations and try to transform them. Post-colonial imaginary to which Freire is readily

linked grew out of precisely this need to understand and represent the oppressive situations and to represent them through media as varied as literature, pamphlets, posters, music, theatre, radio, cassette tapes, loud speakers, telephones, television, and film. These genres have explored the possibility of a narrative or a discourse, however hybrid and syncretic, to arise from within as opposed to being imposed from without. They also offer an amazing reflexivity among the creators to be critical of the media deployed and to remain sensitive to local traditions of story-telling. Kenyan born Ngugi Wa Thiong'O switched to Gikuyu from English in many of his stories. Musicians all over the developing worlds have articulated through song and dance their everyday oppression. Cassette tapes with low costs of production have been hugely important in conveying these new narratives. Freedom music in South Africa was the sine qua non of the struggle against apartheid and in the formation of 'Black Consciousness.' 'What is Black consciousness?' asks Steve Biko. In a passage that harkens to Freire and Fanon, Biko declares: 'At the heart of this kind of thinking is the realisation by blacks that the most potent weapon at the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed' (Biko 1973).

Most post-colonial literature, although now often critiqued to be elitist, grew out of precisely this sort of an attempt to code and understand the world. Literary theory has long considered texts to be forms of dialogues that authors conduct with a presumed audience, displaced temporally or spatially. The 'power' of story-telling lies in the ability of authors to speak to an audience and initiate conversations. Thus Chinua Achebe's (1959/1994) *Things fall Apart* can be read, among other things, as the coding of patriarchy and colonialism in Nigeria. Achebe himself is credited with finding a unique voice and language to introduce African story-telling. Even magical realism, that speaks to a surrealist coding in Gabriel Garcia Marquez, can be understood as a uniquely Latin American answer to the almost phantasmagorical events that shaped the Bolivarian lands about which he writes. More recently, Colombian writing has rejected the magical realism to a more gritty and stark writing outlining the poverty, violence, and pathologies of a drugs and paramilitaries ridden society (Forero 2003). Consider the following passage from Jorge Franco's *Rosario Tijeras*, where the narrator is looking out from a hospital window:

From the hospital window Medellin looks like a Christmas crèche. Tiny lights encrusted in the mountainside twinkle like stars. There are no dark spaces along the slopes, which are covered with lights from top to bottom, and the 'silver cup' shines as never before. The lighted buildings give it a cosmopolitan look, an air of grandeur that makes us think that we've already conquered underdevelopment. The metro crosses through the middle, and when we first saw it snake throughout the city, we thought we'd finally emerged from poverty.

(Franco 2004, p. 39)

Interestingly, the cover of *Rosario Tijeras* quotes Gabriel Garcia Marquez as noting that Jorge Franco ‘is one of the authors I would like to pass the torch to.’ One can only conjecture the meaning of the term torch in this context, but it would be safe to assume that it refers to some shouldering of responsibility to tell particular stories.

Most narratives from the developing world reveal tremendous complexity in their stories problematizing everything from gender and sexuality to notions of nationhood and past conceptions of modernity. The demise of the social novel that writers like Milan Kundera (1988) have bemoaned, may only hold for the West, not the rest. A cynical reading of this comes from Frederic Jameson (1986) who categorized all ‘Third World Literature’ as nothing more than a ‘national desire,’ which according to Jameson was exercised in the literatures of nineteenth-century Europe. The article unleashed tremendous controversy with even Jameson’s fellow progressives accusing him of Orientalism in which the ‘Third World’ writer is posited as being backward and merely surviving in mimetic modes (see, for example, Ahmad 1987). In Freire’s terms, what Jameson was missing was the coding that reflected and problematized the meaning of existence to the presumed audience. How else to understand the following passage from Tsitsi Dungarembga’s schoolgirl Nyasha in the novel *Nervous Conditions* when she realizes the weighing yokes of sexism, racism, and colonialism surrounding her, interestingly in a series of conversations she has with her cousin Tambu in the novel:

Nyasha was beside herself with fury. She rampaged, shredding her history book between her teeth (‘Their history. Fucking liars. Their bloody lies.’), breaking mirrors, her clay pots, anything she could lay her hands on and jabbing the fragments viciously into her flesh, stripping the bedclothes, tearing her clothes from the wardrobe and trampling them underfoot. ‘They’ve trapped us. They’ve trapped us. But I won’t be trapped. I’m not a good girl. I won’t be trapped.’

(Dungarembga 1988, p. 201)

In this and other post-colonial narratives, there can be no doubt that even if a national desire is getting expressed, it is one infused with questioning of the means and ends of nationhood, its antecedents in colonialism, and its passage to modernization and modernity through other institutions that may be oppressive such as state, patriarchy, class. Writing in the context of postcolonial politics, Henry Giroux (1993) notes that Freire embodies the postcolonial possibility that is less dismissive of nationalist concerns and also recreates the possibilities of decentered subject as opposed to none at all. Interestingly, Giroux (1993, p. 184) also notes: ‘Postcolonial critics have made clear that the old legacies of the political left, center, and right can no longer be so easily defined. Indeed, postcolonial critics have gone further and provided important theoretical insights into

how such discourses either actively construct colonial relations or are implicated in their construction.'

I would connect the reality coding in postcolonial narratives as equivalent to *conscientização*, where a Nyasha in colonial Rhodesia realizes that all that education will get her nowhere; she is merely being assimilated. Jorge Franco's *Rosario Tijeras* cannot escape from poverty even though the Latin American soap operas, themselves products of modernization, promise her hope: 'From *Esmeralda*, *Topacio*, and *Simplemente Maria* she learned that she could get out of poverty by taking sewing classes . . . the only women who got rich were the owners of the schools for cutting and dressmaking' (Franco 2004, p. 15). A similar disillusionment with modernity is expressed by the epistolary protagonist of Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*: 'Because, being the first pioneers of the promotion of African women, there were very few of us. Men would call us scatter-brained. Others labeled us devils. But many wanted to possess us. How many dreams did we nourish hopelessly that could have been fulfilled as lasting happiness and that we abandoned to embrace others, those that have burst miserably like soap bubbles, leaving us empty-handed?' (Ba 1980, pp. 14–15).

Using a Freirian perspective, I would assert that post-colonial narratives have come forth over and over again to note in one way or another that they have tried to problematize and provide a coding for their presumed audiences to initiate conversations. If anything, many of them have experimented with various genres and media to provide for more realistic coding. Sembene Ousmane turned to film after writing *God's Bit of Wood* because as he noted himself, films are uniquely African in their story telling in terms of the spoken word, incidentally not dissimilar to Freire's quote earlier regarding the power of the spoken word in Latin America. Tsitsi Dungarembga also turned to film for documentaries and story-telling. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in a revealing essay on the role of the intellectual through globalization, notes that 'the globe is shrinking into a village because of information technology and yet its divisions of culture have deepened' (Thiong'o 2006, p. 37) He follows up: 'We only have to connect, to help put faiths and doctrines and languages, big or small, into dialogue' (p. 38).

Post-colonial narratives show that the possibilities of finding a cultural voice, *conscientização*, naming the world, coding and de-coding extend beyond Freire to a host of other pedagogic devices and writings. This expands the feasibility and scope of Freire's pedagogy and possibilities for dialogue. Seen as such, the role of Freedom Music in Apartheid South Africa (Hirsch 2003) or reggae in the Caribbean may be similarly understood as naming the world and trying to transform it.⁹ Not far from Freire's Recife, Tropicalismo musicians such as Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil expressed an ideology similar to that of Freire in their music and were also sent into exile. In fact, Gilberto Gil had a homecoming similar to that of Paulo Freire; he currently serves as minister of culture in

the Lula administration. Veloso's (2002) book *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil* documents the politics of this music and the art movement, Tropicalia, of which this music was a part. At several places in the text, Veloso connects Freire's literacy methods with the goals of the *tropicalistas*.

In speaking of these communication technologies of cultural representation – in novels, music, and film – it is important to appreciate how seldom cultural representation is mentioned in terms of communication technologies. There is definitely a critique of such technologies extending from Adorno and Horkheimer in speaking of the false ideology perpetuated by cultural industries and the international cultural division of labor that perpetuates capitalism (for example, see Miller & Yudice 2002). However, the types of narratives named above, where the cultural voice is realized and articulated are easily marginalized in these theories. Seen in this context, it is hardly surprising that Frederic Jameson's essay 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Corporation' co-joins the purposes of the third world narrative with that of the development of capitalism and national desire. Interestingly, Escobar's critique of modernization and capitalist ideology 'which treated people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of "progress"' (1986, p. 44) nonetheless is prefaced, literally in the Preface, as inspired by Michel Foucault and 'the vibrant sounds of many Third World Musicians – Caribbean, West African, and Latin American' (p. ix). In emphasizing a need for 'cultural politics' to displace the earlier 'development imaginary' (p. 153), Escobar quotes an evocative passage from Cinema Novo filmmaker Glauber Rocha, which speaks to the role of cultural representations: 'We [Cinema Novo filmmakers] understand the hunger that the European and majority of Brazilians have not understood. . . We know – since we made these sad, ugly films, these screaming desperate films where reason does not always prevail – that this hunger will not be cured by moderate governmental reforms and that the cloak of technicolor cannot hide, but only aggravates its tumors' (p. 153).

It is also important to distinguish these narratives from the failed experiments in development communication until quite recently that were by and large monologic and instrumental in their thinking and specified end-goals, namely modernization and industrialization, that could be met through media messages. Nevertheless, these early experiments also opened up possibilities later of what might be genuinely termed dialogic. In the traditional development communication models such as those of Lerner (1958) and Rogers (1983), radio after all was supposed to bring modernity to the developing world by awakening 'traditional' societies to 'modern' forms of communication. Although we dismissed these models as too instrumental and unaware of structural constraints, and hurling people toward an unquestioned notion of modernity, yet thankfully we did recognize in these early communication messages creative possibilities of representation. Current conceptualization of the 'capacity to aspire' relies on some instrument or the other to make individuals and groups aware of their

condition and aspire for a better life in the future (Appadurai 2004). Appadurai himself accords special attention to the staging of rituals in helping individuals acquire this capacity to aspire. Relatedly, Appadurai brings in Charles Taylor's notion of 'politics of recognition' in fostering empathy among unlike groups (Taylor 1992).

We have come a long way in thinking of traditional and new media in terms of voice, aspiration, and social change. Radio was seen as one-way communication. Along came two-way or interactive radio (sometimes in the form of call-in shows). Scatamburlo-D'Annibale *et al.* (2006) note the important role of 'alternative media' in fostering dialogic communication. As opposed to corporate media, which they posit as legitimizing capitalist oppression, people owned radio and television *can* lead to an 'active, engaged, informed political participation' in the Freire sense (p. 7). In particular, they note the importance of Independent Media Center movement, a global progressive network 'dedicated to 'horizontal' and 'non-hierarchical' forms of communication and organization. . . As in many other parts of Latin America, Indymedia Argentina represents *media for the oppressed*.' Indymedia offers broadcasting possibilities through multimedia uses such as Internet, radio and pirated TV signals but most importantly its proponents celebrate its ability to provide alternative forms of story-telling.

Radical analysts such as one above regularly scoff at representational politics offered through 'corporate media' but these alternative story-telling possibilities, nonetheless, are regularly found. Take the example of *telenovelas* or soap operas. Two billion people all over the world now watch Latin American telenovelas and the cultural establishments backing them challenge Hollywood's dominance, itself the sine qua non of media imperialism for radical writers. More importantly, while these soaps are often critiqued for offering escapist and commodified fantasies revolving around romance and beauty, the emphasis in the plotlines on structural obstacles such as poverty, class, and bureaucracy distinguishes them from US soap operas (Martinez 2005). Even these supposedly monologic representations open up dialogic possibilities in allowing the audiences to imagine a different world. As dialogic communication is wont to do, the possibilities cannot be named in advance. Abu-Lughod (2002, p. 316) provides an example from the socially progressive Egyptian soap *Hilmiyya Nights* where several poor women in Cairo liked 'not the serious political or social messages but the character of Nazik Hanem, the aristocratic, conniving, magnificently dressed *femme fatale* who plays the leading female role.' The progressive modernity preached through the social messages of the soap seems to be out of reach of most audience members but a conniving character who can rise through social obstacles, regardless of her aristocratic origins, offers more imaginary possibilities for an audience trapped in 'the modernity of poverty, consumer desires, underemployment, ill health, and religious nationalism' (p. 322). While Abu-Lughod offers the image of a complex modernity, the Nazik Hanem

representation that she underscores is now corroborated through the rise of the media savvy Arab female singers from Lebanon and Egypt. The lyrics and the sex-appeal of these music videos are now seen as challenging patriarchal practices in the Arab world (Mellow 2005). These scattered examples do not amount to an unquestioned acceptance of all media messages but an exploration of these messages in dialogic terms so we do not throw out the proverbial baby with the bathwater here.

The Internet and representation

Interestingly, while most emancipatory politics that may have emerged from twentieth century communication technologies of cultural representations and expressions remained neglected by Freire scholars, despite a few references here or there to audio-visual technologies in Freire's writings, curiously the emergence of the Internet is correcting such lacunae in scholarship and practice. It is also now leading to a re-examination of other representational practices offered through more traditional media. In the past, the conduits of communications – telephones, radio, satellites, and television – were a source of critique among communication scholars. They were often posited as dominated by markets, states, upper classes, or other structural actors, such that there was no space for marginalized voices (see various essays on development communication in Mody 2003). Some of this neglect of communication media may have been due to their ties to perceived institutions of domination or in their role being described through precepts of modernization theory, which Freire and his followers vociferously critiqued (see, for example Melkote & Steeves 2001; Huesca 2003). Nevertheless, despite the institutional and capitalistic roots of the Internet, its exponential growth in the last decade and a half and its role in spawning new cultural politics and cyber movements are leading to a correction of the lacunae mentioned above.

Two types of visions, paralleling the moves toward dialogic discourse in Freire, may be posited as ideal types in locating the new cultural politics of the Internet. Both types are hopeful regarding the context under which Internet might allow for 'naming of the world' and the rise of cultural voices. In one vision such hopefulness is accompanied by 'questioning the centrality of markets and production as principles of social life, something that the neoliberal ideology in vogue seems incapable of doing' (Austerlic 1999, p. 74). The Zapatista case is regularly cited as 'among the first to acknowledge the importance of using emerging communication technologies, particularly the Internet, to circumvent corporate media and reach audiences sympathetic to their cause' (Scatamburlo-D'Annibale *et al.* 2006, p. 9). Despite this almost ritualistic incantation denouncing market forms and ideologies, the Austerlic essay mentioned above, inspired in part by Freire's work cited in it, affirms the following: 'What is needed in order to compete in the information society is not so

much quantity, but the added value – understood as meaning and context – of what is being said; this in turn requires attention to cultural context, and to the wider dimensions of telecommunications when thinking about content’ (p. 72). This is a radical departure from earlier thinking, which dismissed telecommunications as an instrument of capitalist expansion and, in turn, also neglected the content ‘the added value’ referred to in Austerlic. Franklin (2005) similarly notes that the everyday online practices of marginalized groups (she examines Pacific Islanders), do offer some hopeful conclusions regarding collective identity formation despite the constraints posed by structural capitalist forces shaping the Internet’s development.¹⁰

A second vision regarding the Internet, again in the context of Freire, presents the possibilities of dialogic communication without making a critique of neo-liberalism its central feature or point of entry. This, however, should not be taken to mean that the vision is consistent with market means, just that the issue does not open or dominate the discussion. Lankshear and Knobel (2005) present the example of ‘Virtual valley’ in Brisbane, Australia, from a Freirian perspective. In Virtual valley, marginalized youth including aboriginal youth, used the World Wide Web from the mid-1990s onwards to present cultural representations, understood by the authors as codification. The authors note that these codifications may not meet the Freirian criterion of ‘naming the world’ to transform it. The youth, nevertheless, produced critical representations of their reality, including poetry and role-play. ‘In developing alternative textual readings and writings of the Valley, participants produced artifacts that could serve very well as codes, or codifications, for a Freirian approach to dialogical pedagogy’ (Lankshear & Knobel 2005, p. 301).

It is too early to tell if these alternative movements and readings will lead to an non-oppressive world. Nevertheless, networking technologies now offer possibilities that were hitherto unavailable. The global movement for the World Summit for Information Society (WSIS) has brought together multiple stakeholders to deliberate Internet governance and the digital divide (across national, gender, and class lines, among other things) rather than the usual elite audience of government, International organizations, and corporations. While the civil society participants have faced all kinds of material and epistemic obstacles in participating effectively in forums such as WSIS (Franklin 2007a), they nevertheless also point to the rise of globally networked organizations such as the Association for Progressive Communication for providing a voice to grassroots organizations (Mueller *et al.* 2007). In this sense, both globalization and the Internet may be seen as facilitative elements of a bottom-up activist transnational civil society, which challenges the ability of the existing power holders to name the world as they see fit.

Nevertheless, an additional caution is necessary. The Internet itself, as in the case of Internet governance, is fully capable of reinforcing existing power hierarchies. Despite the rapid diffusion of the Internet, the digital divide, both in

terms of the access to the Internet and the literacy required to operate through it, remains all too real. Not all narratives of ICTs analyzed in the Freire sense are as hopeful as the Virtual Valley one above. Freire and Behunick (2007) found that the use of ICTs in classrooms reinforced the banking model of education that Freire critiqued rather than encourage problem-posing. As one would expect with Freire, these findings are consistent with his thought on the social context of technology. Context matters in interpretations of the content carried over the Internet. The pedagogies of oppression, indignation, and hope exist simultaneously. I now turn to the dominant praxis within which Freire's developmental politics evolved and then turn to its critique in relation to market features.

Means and ends: markets and participatory action

The model for development that arose in response to Latin American writers, in large part influenced by Freire, in development praxis came to be known as Participatory Action Research or PAR, and it provided not just a critique of modernization theory but, more recently, of neo-liberalism ideology in general. This final section extends the discussion on communication technologies above to show that the focus on dialogic communication is often missing in PAR and, second, it raises the possibility of de-coding PAR praxis of making grand claims regarding markets.

Broadly conceived there is an element of participation at the local level in most development interventions these days. However, participation does not necessarily lead to consciousness awakening unless subjects are able to name their world, challenge or questions existing power relations, and then articulate action (the A in PAR) aimed toward transformation. PAR scholarship seldom meets all these criteria. At the sake of sounding simplistic, most PAR scholarship so far has either critiqued models of development as being too driven by existing powerholders or themselves articulate the hopelessness of being able to effect genuine participatory action. Huesca's (2003) essay analyzing the evolution of PAR records a 1978 seminar on participatory communication at the Center for Advanced Studies and Research for Latin America (CIEPAL) where scholars 'concluded that uses of mass media in development imposed the interests of dominant classes' (p. 211). He notes that in subsequent years the participatory paradigm may have been misused and hijacked by development agencies such as the World Bank where no genuine participation took place and power holders were unwilling to yield anything to the marginalized. He notes a few instances where alternative and participatory media might be utilized effectively but in general this essay is pessimistic on the prospects for PAR. He ends by noting that researchers should push the PAR agenda 'by aligning themselves with new social movements that have recently emerged worldwide' (p. 221).

Similarly Escobar's (1995) critique of modernization imaginary, frequently cited by the PAR scholars, remains a critique of modernization ideas rather than a constructive step toward laying out the feasibility of an alternative pedagogy as Freire had done. Huesca's call regarding social movements is misplaced; without genuine participation in grassroots development work, joining social movements while a good expression of solidarity with the oppressed can devolve into empty sloganeering. Freire's praxis was rooted in grassroots work with peasants in Latin America and Africa, which he understood as a call for cultural action (see Freire 2000/1970, chapter 4). I would advocate development work rather than joining social movements as a better avenue for PAR praxis.¹¹ On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that central elements of dialogic communication are often missing from development projects that claim to be participatory. A widely used manual at the World Bank on participatory methods (Rietbergen-McCracken & Narayan 1998), presents experts who engage people at the grassroots utilizing various participatory techniques. However, in most of these methods the emphasis is on engagement, rather than questioning the ways in which the experts acquired the codes and representations with which they wish to foster engagement.

At this point, one might also question the inbuilt codes with which radical Freire scholars denounce market means and neo-liberalism, often conflating the two, and understanding them as Eurocentric instruments of domination. More recently, the trend has become evermore insidious in denouncing any analyst who sees market-led possibilities as being aligned with reactionary regimes such as that of George W. Bush in the United States. A recent essay from well-known Freire scholars presents a Manichean mediated world as sharply divided between corporate neo-liberal ideology, as encouraged by the U.S. administration, and the voices of progressive media with not a mosquito in-between. In this scenario 'American media were transmogrified into hollow echo chambers that gleefully valorized US military might' leading a Schwarzneg-grian 'Hummer pedagogy' that 'discourages people from thinking, from asking too many questions' (Scatamburlo-D'Annibale *et al.* 2006, pp. 3–4). While the intent of the authors is to resurrect the public, the so-called 'bewildered herd' in Walter Lippmann's terms, in these discourses, they are blissfully unaware that these discourses already exist in the spaces that they themselves have argued away. If the public itself were to dare assert that such dialogic possibilities exist for them in imagining a different world, they would probably be dismissed by these authors as being misguided or suffering from a false consciousness. One wonders who is the elite power structure? The scores of Arab women feeling empowered through commodified music? Audiences imagining a different world through soap operas and telenovelas? Marginalized youth congregating over corporate owned Internet networks? In the end, these Freire scholars are afraid to view the public as anything but a bewildered herd unless they participate over the author approved Indymedia channels.

A full-fledged critique of the elitist assumptions made by a few radical Freire scholars is beyond the scope of this essay but a few other things, which build on analysis above, may be noted here. First, many of the technologies deployed in dialogic communication are available precisely because of the fall in marginal costs of production, which has been chiefly market-led. Lacking in analysis of dialogic communication is any kind of crude or sophisticated understanding or even lip service paid to the cost functions of technology. This does not only apply to alternative media. Internet diffusion (despite those who do not have access to it) is an example. Moore's Law, at least in part, facilitates Internet diffusion and the possibilities of dialogic communication outlined above. The latter, named after Intel Chairman Gordon Moore, refers to the high fixed cost versus negligible marginal costs of digital technology. Once the technology is deployed, its replication becomes easier. A computer program takes millions of dollars to invent but its replication onto a disk takes few cents. Notwithstanding the concerns of intellectual property piracy raised by the inventors, technology diffusion even through perfectly 'legal' means is faster than it has ever been. This instrumental invocation should serve here as a counter-point to its complete omission in Freirian analysis even in terms of context rather than an attempt to replace this analysis with neo-classical economics. Of course, falling marginal costs facilitate neither consciousness awakening nor dialogues, but they can connect farmers in Recife with like-minded interests around the world. The Association for Progressive Communication mentioned above is but one example of this (apc.org). Medium theorists have even argued that media can in fact facilitate particular types of epistemic shifts (McLuhan 1964; Deibert 1997). Second, Freirian analysis makes the call for analyzing cultural voices with an anthropological sensitivity but a similar call for anthropological analysis of markets in the developing world, especially prior to colonization, is chiefly ignored. Such anthropological analysis might show that markets are situated in every culture and imaginary and that the idea of fostering economic interactions without markets is non-sensical. To take an example, Guyer (2004) provides a global anthropology of monetary transactions in Atlantic Africa through history. These transactions are frequently misinterpreted as feudal or primordial in the typologies of market instruments developed in the West, which tends to misunderstand the symbols and meanings of market exchange in Africa. She notes, for example, 'that asymmetry in monetary exchange was understood and expected' and in fact 'dramatized' and presented on 'a continuum of performative artistic practices' in Atlantic Africa (p. 40). After providing a rich tapestry of the multiple, contingent, negotiated, entertaining, and dramatic ways in which transactions have evolved in West Africa, she concludes:

However, African practices also provide a geographically broad, historically deep, and experientially rich source from which to contemplate how people

have not been utterly 'bewildered' in the creation of their own transactional orders at the interface with the 'unmanageable power' unleashed by the 'advent' of what Morgan called civilization' but what we might prefer to call 'modernity'.

(Guyer 2004, p. 176)

In Guyer's narrative, West Africans are bewildered neither by markets nor modernity even though it impacts them adversely, thus there is no hidden narrative here of the triumph of indigenous or imported market forms or capitalism. The West Africans nevertheless creolized this modernity with their highly symbolic and representational practices. This is a view of markets from below. I would assert that Escobar (1995) provides a view of markets from above and equates them with neo-liberalism. He details the market practices that were imposed and his ethnography (a literature review really) is mostly about how modernization was conceived in elite academies, international institutions, and western governments. He speaks of development as 'a top down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach' (p. 44). Without providing an ethnography of what happens on the ground, Escobar's own approach is top-down and ideationally technocratic. Escobar also presents a universalizing narrative. Latin America has a peculiar history featuring almost a tight bipolarity between its social revolutionaries and its market liberals. Recently, Santiso (2007) has suggested that this binary is breaking down and giving way to pragmatism in Latin America such as the type seen in Lula's Brazil. One wonders why the PAR or other researchers have refused to engage with anything beyond the black and white limits of their own research? Fortunately for us, the many representational practices arising in the developing world provide richer codes of reality as understood on the ground, even when infused with market practices (Singh 2007). In this essay these codings have ranged from the post-colonial narratives to the use of the Internet, but this is merely a tip of the iceberg. If as scholars we truly care about how the oppressed name their world, then we would be well advised to start with the cultural hybridities and creolizations that arise from representational practices on the ground (see for example Hannerz 1992; Garcia Canclini 1995; Kraidy 2005). We might even find considerable or, at least, some agency among the oppressed analogous to George Elliott's caveat in *Middlemarch*: 'but is there any yoked creature without its private opinions?' Anthropologically speaking, it would be the location of this agency and its understanding of representational practices, as mediated in and through communication technologies, that might help us advance emancipatory politics.

Without going into too much detail, my point is this: the critiques of markets by many Freire scholars present neither an anthropological understanding of transactional practices that would be consistent with their praxis nor are they appreciative of crude notions of marginal costs that can instrumentally, dare I use the

word, facilitate diffusion of many communication technologies around the world, especially as the oppressed use them to organize and find a cultural voice.

Conclusion

Despite any shortcomings or critiques, the impact of Freire's pedagogy on development communications and cultural representations cannot be underestimated. Freire provides both a historical antecedent as well as a counterpoint to the anthropological understandings of cultural capacity prevalent in development studies these days. Recently, Appadurai (2004) has written of the 'capacity to aspire' as the cultural capacity where the poor can apprehend their reality and try to transform it through a 'future-oriented logic' (p. 59). Although sounding suspiciously like the *conscientização* and cultural capacity in Freire, Appadurai's capacity to aspire admits to human agency and efforts by the poor to preserve their dignity even through oppression and then culminates in a set of ritualistic, organizational, and performative practices through which the poor can imagine a better future for themselves and reclaim their dignity. Freire admits to hardly any agency before *conscientização* but in his schema the oppressed need to first comprehend the conditions of their material and mental existence before they exercise their cultural capacity. The performative rituals he suggests begin with dialogic and representational communications; cultural capacity must await a consciousness awakening. The pedagogy of consciousness awakening precedes any capacity to aspire, especially if the latter does not exist; people must comprehend their past to anticipate the future with any kind of hope. Wood (2004, p. xx) critiques dialogic communication scholars' insistence that spoken dialogue often assumes a 'capacity to reply' (the concept comes from Tedlock and Mannheim 1995) without examining the underlying structural contexts within which these capacities are embedded. Freire is careful in explaining these circumstances. Later in his life, Freire was so exasperated with the misuse of the concept of *conscientização*, with scholars implying that all conversations revealed such an awakening, that he stopped using the concept altogether (Mayo 2005, p. 170).

Freire's praxis touched upon issues of cultural representations that either serve as limit situations for the oppressed or, when coded and de-coded, allow them 'freedom from fear'. At the level of cultural representation, the role of Freire as a key thinker in the information age becomes clear. Not only is analysis of ICTs biased toward thinking of 'conduits' or infrastructures of communications but 'content' or representational issues seldom get to the kind of anthropological and emancipatory possibilities that Freire strives for in his pedagogies. Nevertheless, this essay also critiques understandings in participatory action research that are much better at showing the *limits* of 'dominant' communication modes than in outlining the *possibilities* of dialogic communication beyond a few isolated circumstances. I even suggest that the bias in dialogic

communication toward only examining non-market means, and the assumption that there is no consciousness awakening that admits to market solutions, is limiting. I have deliberately used the term markets, the basis of economic transactions, here rather than neo-liberalism, the term embodying the ideology of markets vilified relentlessly by many scholars. I do not hope to persuade the legions of progressive scholars of the efficacy of my pithy analysis here but to posit a few questions, however provocative, that I think are worthy of exploration as we continue to code and decode our constructed realities.

Notes

- 1 Freire's radical politics were rooted in dialectics of class struggle, a critique of private property, and in calls for a social revolution.
- 2 The quote is from *Letters to Cristina* (his first wife), Freire 1996, p. 84.
- 3 This foreign led import substitution industrialization forms the subject of 'dependency theory' in post colonial Brazil noting the alliance of ruling classes and domestic and foreign capital in Brazil. Exemplars include Frank Cordoso and Faletto, 1979; Evans 1995.
- 4 Quotations from this work are from Freire (2005), which includes the 1965 work.
- 5 These program in 1963 received funds from the Agency of International Development in the United States government, a controversial move that might have stemmed from US government's political interest in checking the rise of communism in rural Latin America in the wake of the Cuban Revolution.
- 6 Literary scholars often understand 'dialogue as a social production, as a form that necessarily revises the prevalent postromantic concept of a single, originary writer and a designated, implied reader' (Macovski 1997, p. 4).
- 7 Apart from Fromm, critical consciousness is obviously rooted in phenomenological analyses that seek to comprehend and critically analyze the presence of any phenomena. Phenomenologist philosophers such as Hegel, Heidegger, and Jaspers were widely discussed in ISEB.
- 8 Post modern theory on dialogues, during Freire's own time, following Bakhtin and others was headed in the direction of a decentered and fragmented subject. In contrasting Freire's approach to Bakhtin, McLaren notes that 'dialogue needs to be seen as praxiological and not an equal linguistic/intersubjective exchange' (McLaren 1996, p. xii). For more on Bakhtin's approach to dialogues, see essays in Macovsky 1997 who notes that American literary studies strive for 'hermeneutic pluralism, reformist change, and critical ambiguity' (p. 19).
- 9 One of the few texts in international relations and international communication to investigate the role of music in communicative forms is Franklin 2005.
- 10 Frankin (2005) examines the cultural politics of music and her introduction notes that globalization allows the consumer to adopt to some extent a cultural

identity, which emboldens neoliberalism through commodification. The various essays posit both significant departure from and critiques of neoliberalism in music-making.

- 11 For the purposes of full disclosure and reflexivity, much of what I write here was itself borne out of the implementation of a development project among marginalized women's crafts cooperatives in lower Himalayas, financed by a competitive grant from World Bank's Development Marketplace Competition. The experience is documented in Singh and Hart (2004) and analyzed using Freire and other perspectives.

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J. P. Singh is Associate Professor at the graduate program in Communication, Culture and Technology at Georgetown University and Editor of the *Review of Policy Research*, the politics and policy of science and technology. He is the author of *Negotiation and the Global Information Economy* (Cambridge, 2008), *Leapfrogging Development? The Political Economy of Telecommunications Restructuring* (SUNY, 1999) and co-editor of *Information Technologies and Global Politics* (with James N. Rosenau, 2002). Address: Communication, Culture and Technology, Georgetown University, 3520 Prospect St, NW, Washington, 20009 USA. [email: jps6@georgetown.edu]
