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Meeting of Experts
Communication Policies and Planning
in Latin America
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This Working Paper by L. R. Beltrán covers most of
the issues on the Agenda. It links theoretical
exposition with illustrations of communication
problems in Latin America. Priorities for policy
action are suggested and proposals made on how to
translate principles into operations. Major contra-
dictions, obstacles and likely clashes of ideologies
and other interests in the arena of policy planning
for development are identified. Urgent themes for
applied research and steps to improve the basis of
facts and figures are also outlined.
The papers calls for discussion as its purpose.

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NATIONAL COMMUNICATION POLICIES
IN LATIN AMERICA

I. Definition and Nature of National Communication Policies

1.   Policy means a set of positive as well as negative
     prescriptions for social behaviour with regard to
     given phenomena, issues or processes.

2.   Policies are established by social entities – public
     or private – having the power to implement their
     prescriptions among their respective constituencies.
     There are at least three levels at which policies are
     being formulated : professional, institutional and
     national. For instance : an association of physicians
     may have a policy on medical care ; the Chamber of
     Commerce of a country may take a policy line on foreign
     imports ; and a Government may have an educational
     policy embracing the whole system of private and public
     schools and universities in the country.

3.   Because they usually affect large sections of the
     population, government policies tend to be better
     known than institutional or professional ones. Most
     governments do have policies for : (a) wages and prices ;
     (b) taxation and credit ; (c) welfare and insurance ;
     (d) exports and imports ; (e) foreign affairs and
     national security ; (f) land tenure and use ;
     (g) industrial development ; (h) housing and urban
     planning ; and (i) formal education, among others.
     It is thus through policies – public and/or private –
     that the main social, economic, political and cultural
     activities of a country become oriented and regulated.

4.   Policies do differ, among other things, in their degree
     of formalization and their duration. Some are made
     explicit through public statements. This may range,

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in the case of Government policies, from a presidential speech to the country's Constitution, with laws, decrees and specialized regulations in between. In the case of institutional policies, if they are explicit, declarations and regulations will ordinarily contain the policies. And, in the case of professional policies, by-laws and codes are the usual policy manifestation instruments. Policies may also exist - and, in fact, they often do - only in an implicit manner. They may be meant to prevail for years, allowing for some changes from time to time, or they may just be short-term.

5. Often, policies of different entities in a country fail to show adequate articulation among each other. And not infrequently some come into conflict with others. The policies of workers unions, for instance, are normally opposite to those of the employers. Or governmental policies may be in contrast to those of entities representing private interests.

In democratic societies, a national policy can result from reconciling different professional, institutional and governmental interests on a given subject. Such a national policy will normally need to be formulated in explicit terms.

6. As communication is crucial for the very existence of society, countries do also have communication policies, for instance those referring to allocation of radio frequencies and television channels, to protection of copy rights, and to punishment of slander and libel. Other policies may be less visible, i.e. those dealing with press censorship or those relative to manufacturing, importation and distribution of newsprint.

7. Just as in the case of other policies, those pertinent to communication can be explicit, in different degrees, or implicit only. They can also be devised for several years or shorter periods. They are formulated by both

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private and public entities, at local, regional and
national levels.

8. Communication policies are quite often only _partial_ ;
    that is, they refer just to a part of the communica-
    tion system, normally to a given medium. In Latin
    America, policies for the various media are rarely
    integrated. Similarly, due to antagonism of interests,
    there tends to be little articulation between the
    policies of various media owners and those of media
    professionals. And some or all of them may, in turn,
    not be fully compatible with those postulated by the
    Government.
    More notorious yet is the lack of coherence of most
    of such policies with respect to the Government's
    policies and plans for national development.

9. Hence, _a national communication policy_ can be seen
    as sufficiently _integrated_, _explicit_ and _durable_ set
    of partial policies organized into a consistent body
    of behavioural principles and norms for a country's
    communication activities or processes. Such national
    policies do hardly exist yet in many countries of the
    world, including the highly developed ones. For those
    which are less developed, however, the absence of
    national communication policies is more serious
    because communication needs to be organized to speed
    up development.

II. Chief Roles of Policies

10. Policies are normative instruments, tools for encouraging
    the choice and frequency of some behaviour and discour-
    aging the appearance or frequency of some other. They
    spell out the "do" (or "good") signals as well as the
    "don't' (or "bad") ones. Thus they are agents of
    socialization and social control (without which no
    society exists) for various segments of the population.

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11. There are different degrees of positive or negative
stimulation through policies. They may just encourage
some behaviour, or what is more, support it, or even
reward it. Similarly, policies may inhibit, prohibit,
or even punish certain activities. Positive stimulation
aims at socializing people into the desired behaviour
and negative stimulation exerts social control so as
to avoid the occurrence of unwanted behaviour. By
combining the two "social engineering" approaches,
policies attempt to obtain a relatively ,stable pattern
of conduct.

12. Since what is "desirable" and what is "undesirable"
behaviour is subjective, one partial policy may be
at loggerheads with another partial policy on the
same matter. An overall national policy is then
mandatory to harmonize contrasting norms and integrate
them into a blended viable pattern of behaviour
acceptable to most.

13. Since the militancy of conflicting interests makes
compromise usually difficult to be attained, the
establishment and implementation of a national policy
require persuasion, arbitration, coordination and
even coercion powers that, in general, only the
Government possesses. For instance, a mass media
owners' policy may postulate that mass education
is for the government and not for the private mass
communication institutions to care about. Professional
associations within the media and in the educational
system, on the other hand, may advocate that the media
should participate in mass education. The Government
may then include in a national policy a set of norms
for shared responsibilities of public and private
entities.

14. Or it may be a newspaper's policy to play up crime
news and this may be deemed desirable by media owners

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and operators in view of business considerations. The government, however, considering the detrimental effects such editorial policy may have on society, might stand rather for a policy of restraint. The government could then suggest to the newspaper to alter its crime news approach by either rewarding it in various ways for doing so, or by sanctioning it by legal means until the paper modifies its conduct in the service of public interest.

15.   Or a government may have a policy against advertising on radio but broadcast institutions may oppose it on grounds of financial need. In reverse, private enterprises may regard it legitimate to produce and distribute sex films and pornographic literature but the government may prohibit this to protect the morality of youth.

16.   At times, policy and reality fail to fit. For instance, while free and compulsory education of all children in primary-school age may be a policy postulate of governments, countries such as those of Latin America rarely have a school capacity commensurate with population growth. Or, in the sphere of communication, free and equal access to mass media programmes for the whole population may be a policy postulate inscribed even in a country's Constitution but, in practice, only a minority of that population — as it appears to be the case in most Latin American countries — will be able to enjoy such access.

III. Policy Components

17.   Adequate knowledge of the communication system and processes within it is indispensable in order to define well the desired behaviour patterns when formulating the pertinent principles and norms, which can also be called the components of national communication policy.

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They are addressed to the <u>key aspects</u> of the system,
based on an understanding of its <u>structure and functions</u>
and of the <u>various processes</u> taking place within the
system.

Knowing the System

18.   Assuming that in every Latin American country an
overall communication system in fact exists , it can
be said to have, as a rule, two large subsystems :
the <u>inter-personal (face-to-face) subsystem</u> and the
<u>impersonal (mass) subsystem.</u> In some countries, there
exists also a third section in the form of a mixed
subsystem made up of organized combinations of the former
two.

19.   Within the impersonal subsystem, newspapers and radio
stations are the most widespread media.

Within the interpersonal subsystem, a myriad of
unstructured as well as highly organized exchanges
are taking place. Types of organized activity within
the subsystem are agricultural extension services or
community development field units. But the services of
a traveling salesman or of a parish priest belong here
as well.

Within the mixed subsystem, outstanding examples
are radio-school links and rural training schemes
such as farm forums which have been adopted in many
Latin American countries, starting in Colombia more
than twenty years ago.

1/ A true "system" is said to exist when, in addition
to having definite limits as well as input and output
connections with the environment, the sections compo-
sing it influence each other. This is not always the
case in all countries. In fact, in many of them the two
major subsystems do not appear yet sufficiently linked.

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20.	Whatever scheme of analysis they may choose, those
	responsible for promoting national communication
	policies cannot propose sensible norms without being
	properly acquainted with the country's overall communi-
	cation system. It is by knowing it reasonably well in
	its structure and functions and by identifying its weak
	and strong points that they can outline appropriate
	blueprints for its operation, including improvement
	and growth.

Observing the Process

21.	Knowing the system is hardly separable from perceiving
	the process. Although precise and comprehensive obser-
	vation of the process is of course a long-term research
	proposition, the communication policy maker must have
	at least a quick general perception of it so that he
	can aptly formulate norms for conduct.

22.	The necessity of having such knowledge is so self-
	evident that it should suffice to say here that the
	question to be answered by the observer is : Who is
	attempting to communicate which messages, with which
	purposes, to whom, by which means or media, to which
	recipients, and with which apparent effects ?
	The observation scheme implied in that question calls
	attention to how the system actually performs as people
	communicate with each other.

23.	This or other frameworks for observation can be used
	by policy-makers but whatever they opt for to observe,
	they should not loose track of the complexity and
	fragility of the total process when considering norms
	for orienting some desired direction.

24.	The nature of the communication system and process
	deemed desirable by the policy must evolve from the
	identification of people's communication needs,

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aspirations and resources if communication is to be
democratic. All too often, mainly the needs of minc-
rities controlling the system seem to be served
whereas powerless majorities fail to have their needs
taken into account. It is clearly the duty of the
Government to correct through national policy formu-
lation and implementation such situations in the
direction of equality.

Entities to be oriented

25.   Policies are addressed at orienting collective rather
than individual behaviour. The rules are to be followed
by social entities, by relatively formal groupings of
individuals engaged in communication. In most societies
these entities are numerous - within the inter-
personal communication subsystem - to such an extent
that it is often difficult to identify the key entities.
It is obviously easier to identify interpersonal media
entities such as rural school centers or civic local
associations than the roles in given communication
processes of sports clubs, peasant cooperatives or,
even more so, informal local community cliques or
Sunday farmfairs.

26.   Within the impersonal communication subsystem, identi-
fication poses no problem. Visible specialization and
a high level of formalization provide easy clues for
classification. It is well known that by the term
mass media are meant impersonal communication institu-
tions within the domain of press, radio, television and
cinema. Subsidiary vehicles such as books, phonograph
records, tapes (reel or cassette) and photographic
projectable transparencies tend to constitute these days
mass media themselves. They are, however, also instru-
mental to interpersonal group communication.

27.   In a similar manner, there are certain well known
communication services which actually have a massive

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reach, by aggregation, but which basically are intended
to facilitate interpersonal communication of a non
face-to-face nature. This is clearly the case of entities
specialized in the use of telephone, telegraph and
radio-communication (both professional and amateur).

28.   Policy formulation requires careful identification of
all existing types of such entities and detection of
those which are likely to be more instrumental in
effecting behaviour according to the norms. To put it
that way, policies do have specific audiences and, as
all good communicators, those who formulate policies
must know well the social groups to which their norma-
tive messages will be chiefly addressed.

IV Policy Priorities in Latin America

29. One possible approach to classifying communication
in action suggests the following basic categories:
planning, production, distribution, utilization
and evaluation of messages, with production and
distribution being far more amenable to policy
formulation than the others. That is understandable
for, even at the mass level of communication, message
perception and consumption remain an individual
process that falls outside the scope of policies.
But there are factors which deserve consideration,
e.g. the question of media availability, the
distribution of communication means, of media access
and the effective use made of what is being offered.

30. Information for Latin America, for instance, indicates
that while mass media availability is relatively high –
especially for radio – the distribution of media is
asymetric. Urban minorities are served as well as
anywhere in developed countries. Rural majorities,
instead, have minimal access and their opportunity
for interpersonal communication, within the rural
domain, is not all that ample either.

31. Due to insufficient attention to factors as those
just underlined, the communication system of Latin
America tends to be defective. As a result, the
communication process tends not to be functional
formany national purposes such as those geared
towards development. In the absence of adequate
policies that include proper consideration of
some audiences' characteristics, much communica-
tion energy is wasted or misused in several areas.
For instance, appreciable sums of money are spent
in many of the region's countries in producing and
distributing agricultural education publications

which are not understood by the rural population
Or large amounts of money are invested in building
physical infrastructures for social communication
without equivalent financial inputs being made on
soft-ware.

32.   Similar defects can be found in the operation of
bodies concerned with communication <u>training</u> and
<u>research</u>, or those specialized in facilitating
knowledge-exchange through <u>library</u> and <u>documentation</u>.
With a few possible exceptions in a limited number of
countries, policies appear not to be yet in existance
for orienting the behaviour of those types of insti-
tutions in Latin America.

33.   For instance, the case is not uncommon of a sizable
accumulation of knowledge – stored in libraries and
documentation centres – not supplemented by an
adequate distribution mechanism. Also, the growth
of communication training institutions appears to
be erratic; while there are very few training
centres for radio, television and motion picture
production in Latin America, schools of journalism
are sometimes abundant to a point beyond the market's
ability to absorbe their graduates. This is in
clear contrast to the fact that broadcasting
institutions are increasing more rapidly than print-
media. Research-conducting entities are yet few
and weak, with some of them engaging at times in the
investigation of one single topic to the exclusion
of no less important other ones. For instance,
while there are probably over 30 studies on the
diffusion of agricultural innovations, there are
virtually no studies on the effects of radio
messages on children, or on the values being
propagated by foreign-originated television programmes,
or on the ownership pattern of advertising firms.

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Yet, lacking policies, a country cannot expect to
organize the communication system in a more
appropriate manner.

34. A large area of communication behaviour - mostly
of an interpersonal nature - has remained so far
almost totally outside the interest of Latin American
communication researchers, policy makers and planners.
It is the area of organizational or managerial communi-
cation, especially in governmental institutions.
One of the most serious setbacks in the region's
public administration system seems to result from
defective communication. All too often government
agencies fail to communicate adequately internally
and externally. That is, communication among
employees within a given agency is usually as poor
as communication among agencies and between agencies
and the public. Old and bureaucratic structures and
lack of perception of the problems seem to explain
partially why, both vertically and horizontally and
at various levels in each case, the government
structure suffers from communication gaps which
obviously hinder the effectiveness of the whole
machinery.

Would a policy for that kind of communication
behaviour not also be desirable?

35. There are some specialized communication activities
which deserve attention by policy makers. For
instance, those of public relations, advertising,
public opinion polls and propaganda. The former
two are handled by commercial entities and the
latter two may be handled by such firms as well as
by government agencies.

36. Many private firms conduct research upon which they base their operations. Policies are however lacking in Latin America on access to the information thus obtained for purposes other than selling products.

37. A few studies have started to document advertising activity in some Latin American countries. Some of those studies contend that many advertisers are at least partially responsible for inducing the mass media institutions to: (a) promote an irrational buying behaviour pattern in the population in imitation of the big consumer' societies; (b) to play up irrelevant or trivial materials over those which could be more significant to the people; (c) to discourage social change efforts and foster status quo; (d) to facili-tate adoption of alian versus national values; and (e) to secure social conformity by inducing evasion from reality.

Very few governments of Latin America have so far established policies in relation to the behaviour of the advertising firms said to be doing such things.

38. Another specialized communication activity so far out-side the realm of policy in most Latin American countries is that of international news agencies. Research demonstrates that news flow in Latin America is in non-Latin American hands. News from the world to Latin America, from Latin America to the world and even among the Latin American countries are produced and distributed mostly by Associated Press and United Press International, while European agencies, usually dependent on their governments, share a very small proportion of the flow. Latin American news agencies - the two or three that exist - handle a minimal percentage of the news traffic.

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What are the implications of such situation? Is
the behaviour of the foreign news handling entities
congruent with national interests? Does it reflect
accurately the Latin American reality? If the
answers were negative, why should there not be policies
to exert legitimate influence over these activities?

39.   Another area yet of high relevance for policy is that
of mass media ownership. Although empirical informa-
tion is less than satisfactory, there are reliable
indications pointing to patterns of concentration at
several levels. At the national level, in close to
a third of the region's countries, olygopolies have
been detected in press, radio, television and motion
picture industry. There are individuals or family
concerns in those countries which own, for instance,
15, 20 or more radio stations, 2 or 3 television
stations, several newspapers as well as magazines.
At the regional level, there are firms which tend
to dominate the production and distribution - at
least by areas - of entertainment magazines
(comics, romance, fashion, crime, sex). There
are also television production and distribution
firms which command a large proportion of televi-
sion content in several countries and are normally
associated with extra-regional communication
consortia. The same could be said about the major
advertising firms in the region which are sub-
sidiaries of large advertising corporations of
the United States.

Can the Latin American countries afford to let
those operations continue without any guidance
and control?

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40.   Something similar can be said of ultra-modern and cross-
      national communication technology now coming into the
      region, such as satellites As all innovations, these
      are desirable or undesirable depending on use.
      Satellites can overcome to a great extent many of
      today's restrictions and difficulties in reaching
      the large and disperse population of Latin American
      countries They can greatly facilitate mass education
      for development and can help to make the region a full
      member of the world's society and culture. But they
      can, of course, also be used to serve purposes that may
      conflict with the nations' values, needs and interests,
      and even with their sovereignty and security.

      Therefore, would it not be a matter of urgency for
      those countries to formulate policies pertinent to
      the use of such attractive but perhaps double-edged
      communication facilities?

41.   Certain key relationships in the communication system
      and process are of paramount importance for policy
      formulation too One, most evident, is that prevail-
      ing between those who own the mass media entities and
      and those who run them, the entrepreneurs and the
      operators. As it has been said already, each group
      tends to have policies in defense of their interests
      and thus conflict between them naturally occurs.

      Another relationship of importance is that between
      owners and operators and the government, which may
      allow freedom to a degree close to impunity or
      act almost dictatorially, but in any case often
      erratically.
                                                    ...

Of similar importance are the relations between
mass media entities and the public and those among
the different media institutions.

In the absence of overall national policies tending
to rationalize all those relationships, the country's
communication system cannot become a truly integrated
one and, thus, the process of communication cannot
be optimized in the service of general interest.

42. The list and examples given so far are far from
exhaustive but may facilitate further discussion,
evaluation and detailed propositions by the experts.

V. Plurality of Concepts and Ideologies

43. In recent years, the traditional concept of communi-
cation has become subject to debate, and not at
least in Latin America

The best known traditional concept regards communica-
tion as a process of transmission of experiences
(cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural) from one
or more persons to another person or persons.
Normally associated with it the notion has prevailed
that persuasion is the main, if not the only, purpose
of communication.

44. Critics condemn this approach on technical and
ideological grounds. They claim that the mechanical
notion of transmission can hardly apply to human
reality where nothing is really transferred from
one mind to the other but where signals from one
person may be received and interpreted by another
only if the receiver is familiar with the code.

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They also argue that persuasion is but one of
people's purposes when communicating with each
other. Even more, the critics contend that the
traditional concept of communication implies an
autocratic view of human exchange in which one-way
communication prevails with the recipient remaining
a passive and subdued object of a persuasive actor
monologue.

45. It is being proposed, alternatively, that communi-
cation be understood as a process of social inter-
action through a balanced exchange of experiences
in which human beings engage with manyfold purposes.

The proponents of this different perception stress
that it implies the predominance of dialogue over
monologue aiming at achieving horizontal communica-
tion based on an equitable distribution of opportu-
nities for all persons to send as well as receive
messages and thus be influenced as well as being
influential.

46. Although conciliation is hopefully possible, it is
inevitable that for the time being, the two concepts
are clearly different, opposing each other. Ideologies
are undoubtedly behind concepts and policies and,
consequently, national communication policies will
be based on these ideologies prevailing in the
respective countries.

As partial communication policies are likely to stem
from diverse ideologies, overall communication
policies will most likely imply an ideological
compromise. A central feature of that compromise
will have to be some sort of plausible composite
concept of communication.

47. In a country where, in general, a strict __liberal-capitalistic__ ideology prevails, one central policy postulate will be highly visible: unrestricted freedom for private enterprises to engage in communication business without state control; in addition, state-owned and operated communication institutions will be either very few, and rather weak, or none.

In a country where, in general, a strict __socialist__ ideology prevails, the opposite postulate will be central to the policy: no private ownership and operation of key communication institutions, which are in the hands of the state.

In a country which is __ecletic__ about ideologies or is attempting to blend capitalism and socialism, some intermediate postulate will be characteristic. Whatever the stance, national communication policies will necessarily reflect - overtly or not - the prevailing ideological pattern.

48. No attempt will be made here, of course, at classifying the Latin American countries according to the three ideological categories just mentioned. However, it is worth stressing that in most of these countries there has been for long a strong movement towards granting the vast majority of the population access to economic, political and cultural power. Wider social participation is a clear postulate in most government programmes. And, if the postulate is to be implemented, communication policies will have to include provisions for turning communication from being one more privilege that minorities enjoy into a cultural good to be enjoyed by all.

49.   Directly linked to that, policy formulators will
have to ensure that communication is not solely
vertical and unilateral. For, without democratizing
the communication system, the expanded social
participation that many governments are seeking
as a measure of equality appears unattainable.

VI. Towards Policies in Service of Development

50. Data for more than 70 countries indicate that the
general development of a nation is directly
associated with the growth and improvement of its
communication system and process. The more developed
a country is, the more developed its communication
system will be, and in turn, a country at a low
level of development will tend to have an elementary
communication system. Quantitative and qualitative
improvements in education, health, industry, etc.
tend to be supported by similar improvements in the
structure and functions of the communication system
and vice versa.

These tendencies hold also for Latin America.

51. The problem for less developed countries is, however,
that the demonstrated correlation does not necessarily
and automatically imply that their needs are being
satisfied. These countries have yet a long way to
go to activate the communication element of the pair
so that it may operate as a motor for development.

52. Other questions relate to the kind of development
they face and the contents of the evolving communica-
tion system.

For instance, if development is basically understood
as material growth and economic advancement measurable
in terms of production and consumption, then an
appreciable number of Latin American countries are
now approaching significant levels of development.
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But how is such progress distributed? Does it
enhance social justice, diminish social distance,
or grant the immense number of helpless people
better means for expressing their views and
preferences in public affairs, and do people
experience more freedom and respect? Or could it
be, rather, that material advancement and economic
growth are essentially bolstering the privileges
of powerful minorities which are not inclined to
yield to pressures for social change?

Just as in the case of the concept of communication,
then, policy-makers must have some <u>clear ideas about</u>
<u>the preferred kind of development</u> for their countries
when judging the contribution of communication in
that process.

53. In many Latin American countries, the last decade
has seen movements towards revision of the classi-
cal materialistic model of national development
which was copied from the developed countries of the
world, whether capitalistic or socialist. The model
does not seem to be working to the satisfaction of
many even in the highly developed countries. Dis-
favored social minorities and an alienated youth
are expressing discontent with the vision of life
that the development model of those nations implies.
Some Latin Americans have, indeed, started to
question many of the features of the classical
model and appear to be <u>searching for a more human</u>
<u>and democratic one</u>.

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54. If a classical materialistic model is the
preferred one, then probably the kind of communi-
cation system and processes now prevailing in L
Latin America are in line with that kind of
development. The mass media are contributing to
foster more production and are bombarding the
people's minds persuading them to consume more and
more. Development, it would appear, is being
equated almost exclusively with having more things,
with making and using more goods and services. This
is being attempted regardless what the Latin American
people can afford and regardless on whether, by
following suit, they will become better humans - free,
dignified and creative - or whether they may loose
on these basic terms.

55. If, on the contrary, a new model of development is
adopted in which economic growth and physical well-
being are seen only as instruments towards attaining
the highest possible standards of human dignity,
freedom, and creativity in a truly equal and
democratic kind of society, then the role of the
present communication system in Latin America is
likely to be judged differently, i.e. as dysfunctional -
either by indifference or by flat antagonism -
to such kind of development.

56. It follows that postulates about the roles of
communication in a nation's development need to
be validated by a clear conceptualization of
"development" itself, just as a clear conceptualiza-
tion of "communication" is indispensable. Thus
policy-makers - particularly when confronted with a
lack of neat ideological congruence in the
official definitions of their country's development
- may have, once again, to struggle for conceptual

compromise before they can set norms for the
communication system to make it compatible with
the intended development process.

57. At this point, they are most likely to be faced with
an entirely new challenge: that of expressing policies
not only through the standard normative instruments
(rules, regulations, laws, declarations, etc.) but
also through communication plans specifically
designed to fit within broader development plans.
At present, the case is rare of a Latin American
country having a national communication policy geared
to the overall development policy and translated
into communication plans incorporated in a plan
for national development.

58. But why should there be in the first place such
things as national communication policies and
developmental communication plans? Is not communi-
cation something that everybody does and, hence,
does not require much of a special organization?
And, development being something people do, is it
not obvious that they will of course communicate
to be able to do it?

59. If communication was something everybody did
always efficiently and if people would always
communicate successfully in order to develop,
then in fact there might be little need for
organized policies and plans. But it requires
only minimal effort from any observer to find out
that - on the contrary - people communicate
inefficiently much of the time and often fail to
communicate altogether. This is natural since
communication is a process unavoidably fraught

with numerous dangers of break-down or collapse
at each and every point of the process which hosts
it. That process is no less complex than human
beings themselves are and it hinges on so many
variables — of which only a few can be controlled
by those attempting to communicate — that to fail
to communicate well is more likely to be the rule
than the exception.

60. Therefore, even at the most elementary level of
human interaction, communication needs to be
organized if it is to be not only successful but
efficient; that is, effective at a rational
energy expenditure cost. And when it has to be
organized to serve an overwhelming and global task
such as that of attaining a nation's development,
it has to be organized to a degree and in a manner
which apparently has hardly been fully perceived
yet in Latin America.

61. A policy is the broad intellectual root without
which no organization can be optimally fruitful.
And plans are no less than concrete policy expre-
ssion applied to guide specific sets of behaviour
in given frameworks of space, time and resources.
Both are badly needed to facilitate, support and
accelerate Latin America's development.

62. The region counts now on an experience of develop-
mental planning of more than 20 years. Assisted by
several international agencies, the Latin American
governments have trained cadres of excellent
development strategists and planners who practice
in National Planning Boards or even Planning
Ministries. Not accidentally perhaps, economists
and engineers have been the professionals predominating
...

in those teams. Given that the developmental
models prevailing in the region have, so far,
placed heavy emphasis on economic and physical
variables, this situation is understandable.

Two decades of those efforts, however, seem to
have taught many people in the region - including
some leading economists of development - that the
model is far from ideal and that the planning of
the non-economic and non-physical aspects of
development requires as much attention as the
others, if not more. Time and again, development
projects well conceived from the physical and
economic viewpoints and even well financed and
manned, have either fallen short of reaching their
goals or have failed altogether.

63.   One major lesson emerging from failure has been that
the human dimension had been taken for granted if
not ignored altogether. In fact, planners are
learning that influencing the behaviour of human
beings is a far more difficult task than
manipulating water, soil, plants, or animals.

To be sure there shall never be a thing such as
"human programming" or "social engineering" in a
strict and total sense, because human beings are
not easily and completely amenable either to
observation or to manipulation. To conclude from
it, however, that efficient yet democratic planning
of social conduct is impossible, would be mistaken.
Social conduct - history would tell us - can be
planned and, up to a point, cannot be left unplanned
if a country is to become truly developed.

64.   The questions then are how to organize people's
       behaviour in the direction of social change
       without hurting their values and threatening their
       rights; how to alert, stimulate, guide, activate,
       and integrate them without treating them as objects
       or figures?

       Answers for questions as those are much in demand.
       As they are given they tend to lean heavily on
       the contribution of communication.

65.   Communication media - especially those which can
       reach many people - are expected not only to inform
       and motivate but also to assist in education.
       Development requires accelerated learning of
       numerous and diverse principles, attitudes and
       skills. This demand usually reaches a degree that
       cannot be easily satisfied by private mass media
       alone. The government has its role to play.

       In school instruction through television significant
       efforts have been made by many of the Latin American
       governments, but something similar remains to be
       done in many other areas of importance.

66.   It is due in part to the lack of coordinating
       policies and plans that the communication system
       of many a Latin American country seems to be
       growing away from developmental equilibrium. For
       instance, urban radio facilities are growing fast
       while rural community newspapers remain rare.
       Many of the mushrooming radio stations hardly reach
       beyond the urban perimeter or do not in the case
       of the largest cities, cover it all. But no
       matter how limited the scope and how low the

                                              . . .

quality of the   ; radio seems to be good
business and continues to grow while other
urban communication industries such as film
production just creep along.

67. Should such evolution be left alone or should
policies and plans try to step in? Can a
country's limited communication energies be used
arbitrarily without harming development prospects?
On the other hand, if government intervention on
the matter is desirable, how far can it go without
stifling private initiative?

68. Communication planning has, no doubt, numerous
levels. At the lower ones, Latin America has
accumulated already some experiences. For instance,
a few agricultural agencies in Argentina, Chile and
Peru have been able to formulate preliminary blue-
prints for communication plans in support of the
development plans of the rural sector. These are
valuable beginnings but need to be optimized by
fostering improvement at a higher level: that of
rural development policies themselves, which seem
not to be sufficiently advanced yet due, perhaps,
in part to much too frequent variations of approach.
In turn, integration of well conceived and durable
rural development policies with overall development
policies needs to be achieved urgently.

69. One country that is clearly pioneering towards a
national policy for developmental communication is
Colombia, not by accident the seat of this meeting
of experts. Private and even high-level government
groups have been remarkably active, in the last

two years or so, discussing the need for such
policy, accumulating data useful for it and
starting to figure out how to design it. This
is a promising endeavour, potentially useful beyond
Colombia's frontiers.

70. There are no formal and cohesive answers yet. But
since they need to be found, the present expert
meeting which assembles manifold Latin American
experience, talent and preoccupation has been
called by UNESCO. How to conceive a national
communication policy to be translated into communica-
tion plans which in turn are tied into those for
development in general — that is the question.

VII. Procedures for the formulation of national policies

71.   A government convinced of the need for a national
        communication policy fitted to its overall develop-
        ment policy must decide on the kind of organization
        required for policy formulation.
        Organizational possibilities abound and no single
        blueprint is likely to fit all national situations in
        Latin America. But some basic general format that
        includes alternatives for adaptation to each country's
        preferences can nevertheless be drawn up.
        Whatever the arrangement selected by each, high level
        government institutions will have to play a leading
        role in the endeavor, for central authority is required
        if integration and conciliation of opposing view points
        are to be obtained.

        Who formulates policy ?

72.   All private and public entities already active in policies
        will have to be involved in the attempt at building a
        broad and all-embracing communication policy for the
        nation. As mentioned previously, these entities are
        numerous and they often tend to pursue policies inde-
        pendently from each other. (e.g. media institutions,
        associations of media owners, professional associations
        of communicators, different ministries).

73.   Thus a first organizational step in the process of
        policy formulation could be to prepare a detailed
        list of who is presently pursuing which communication
        policies in the government and outside. The list can
        be turned, by classificatory analysis, into a nomen-
        clature, a more refined identification instrument
        useful for many purposes.

74.   But policies, if democratic, cannot be solely designed
        by those who run the media institutions and the

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government agencies concerned with them. The public
itself ought to be given a chance to contribute.
As this, however, involves - in principle - everybody,
the next step in policy formulation might be to
devise methods for selecting representative civic
groupings - not linked to the communication profession
or business - whose opinions are likely to reflect
the views of the population. This is not an easy task.

Mechanisms for Policy Formulation

75.   Assuming that all pertinent institutions have been
identified and called in to participate in the exercise
through a given number of their members, which is the
most effective way to put them to work ?

76.   A panel of Consultants in Communication Research
convened by Unesco has suggested that one way could
be the establishment of a National Communication
Policy Council, an autonomous body to be charged
with the responsibility*. If this is considered a viable
approach, a number of questions arise. Namely :
- How many members should it have to be both repre-
  sentative and effective ?
- How should the council's leadership structure be ?
- Will the council hold authority to ensure the appli-
  cation of the policy or will it only formulate
  it and then deliver it to the government for
  implementation ?

Instruments for Policy Formulation

77.   The body in charge of formulating the national
communication policy will have to establish criteria
for the selection of policy instruments. At least
two considerations are likely to be paramount :
the scope envisaged and the degree of compliance
expected.

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* For details see "Proposals for an International Programme
of Communication Research", UNESCO, COM/MD/20 (10 Sept. 1971)
and "Report of the Meeting of Experts on Communication
Policies and Planning", UNESCO, COM/MD/24 (1 December 1972).

...

78.   On scope, it is understood that a <u>national</u> policy will attempt to integrate all partial policies. Its aim is the <u>most ample</u> possible scope.

79.   On <u>degree of compliance</u> sought for, is the national policy devised to secure conformity with whatever norms have been agreeded upon ? That is, will it not only suggest but secure a certain performance, by positive and negative motivation ? If so, the kind of central instrument required is to enforce the rules. The most formal one would be a <u>General Communication Law</u> which would set the basic rules for each of the main areas composed by the policy and would be detailed further through <u>Specific Regulations</u> for each of those areas.

80.   Although many Latin American countries already have, for instance, General Education Laws outlining their broad educational policies, hardly any of them has yet a General Communication Law. As mentioned before, most of them have only special laws broadly regulating the most notorious media institutions ; for instance, Radio and Televison Laws or, perhaps less frequently, Press Laws.

81.   The more specific components of a joint national policy will probably be formulated in less formal and less mandatory ways but, if they are to be truly integrated, their norms could not be at a marked variance with those of the general laws.

82.   Again, a basic step would be a good <u>descriptive and comparative nomenclature of policy-formulation instruments</u>. What should be the main elements of description and the parameters for comparison ?

...

Policy Options

83.　If policy formulation is performed in a democratic manner, it is bound to be faced with some crucial choices, such as these:

- How to reconcile the right to information freedom with the right to privacy?

- How to accommodate the political or financial interests of private communication institutions with public interests and with non-profit communication activities?

- How to combine the mass media entertainment function with the educational function required by development plans?

- How to avoid the manipulation of people by private of public mass media of communication?

- To which extent should the media foster innovation or seek to preserve tradition?

- To which extent should the media help to integrate different subcultures in a country versus preserving distinctive identities?

- How to protect and promote national values, sovereignty and security through communication and at the same to incorporate each nation, through communication technology today available, as a member of world society?

- Where do the rights of the State in controlling private communication end and where do private rights of communication end themselves?

- How to reach a balance between uniformity of messages, usually a by-product of concentration of media ownership, and message diversity, more easily attainable through dispersion in media ownership?

. . .

-   To which extent and under which conditions are foreign inputs in the communication system to be permitted?

-   What can nations do, individually or in regional groupings, to defend themselves against undesirable communication operations affecting their territories but beyond their control?

-   What should governments and private communication institutions do in order to assure the people, particularly rural people, full access to the communication system?

-   Can communication become horizontal and dialogic within a social structure remaining vertical?

84.   Numerous further questions will assail the mind of those in charge of formulating national communication policies. As there are no ready answers, they will have to struggle through the ideological structures of their nation, and hearing all sides, unavoidably engage in a delicate and complex but crucial exercise at compromising and harmonizing. All will never be pleased with the product, to be sure. But, as long as most may, their efforts will not be deemed illusory and they will have met the challenge.

VIII. Implementation of national communication policies

85.   The best formulated national communication policy
       cannot be effective unless its implementation is properly
       organized. Thus another fundamental task of the central'
       body in charge of the policy is to devise the mechanics
       of putting it into practice.
       That task is likely to involve basically the following
       phases : divulgation and promotion, application, control
       and evaluation, and revision and adjustment.

86.   It is evidently most desirable that the national commu-
       nication policy be given the widest possible divulga-
       tion and promotion. This may occur at a general audience
       level as well as at the level of special groups so as
       to make sure that all those to be affected by the
       policy are reached promptly and properly.
       What should the main avenues for diffusion be ?
       The informational and promotional procedures will have
       variations from country to country but it would be
       desirable for the present meeting of experts to suggest
       basic lines for the task that can be used as starting
       points in each country.

       Application

87.   This phase will involve numerous instances and forms,
       with each of the private and public institutions
       concerned carrying responsibility at varying degrees.
       In many cases spontaneous compliance with the norms
       can be expected. But, in others, doubts may arise at
       the time of implementation or diverse interpretations
       may enter the scene. In such situations, negotiations,
       clarifications and arbitrations will have to be carried
       out, by that organ holding overall authority for the
       application of the national policy. The more concrete
       and detailed the policy is, the less problems of this
       order may arise. But, since perfect prescription is not
       possible, perhaps some formal mechanism should be

                                                        ...

permanently available to pronounce itself with
authority where required.

Control and Evaluation

88.   There is no certainty about the degree and manner to
which the national policy is applied unless there
exists some permanent control and evaluation mecha-
nism concerned with questions as the following :
Which areas of the policy seem to lend themselves to
easier and wider application and why ? Which, on the
other hand, seem to be major obstacles for proper
implementation ? Is the desired set of behaviour
being resisted by many ? Are the norms being circum-
vented by some ? Or are those norms not clear or
loosing validity in view of significant changes in
the situation ?

89.   Evaluation questions go beyond simple verification of
compliance. They seek to analyse the actual effects -
positive or negative - of the policy in terms of
behavioural consequences. While the control function
is likely to do little more than systematic and
continuous information gathering, the evaluation
function will be expected to produce judgement about
the policy on a scientific basis.

Revision and Adjustment

90.   Both control and evaluation are justifiable only if
the policy is not considered a sort of holy gospel.
The purpose behind control and evaluation is to
revise and adjust the policy as often and as substan-
tially as deemed convenient.

91.   Also, sensitivity to innovation is desirable as a
country's communication system progresses. The
rythm of development produces by itself new communi-
cation needs which may alter the communication process

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and thus require fresh prescription. For instance, a
country may incorporate into its communication system
national tele-education facilities after having esta-
blished its overall communication policy. The policy
will then certainly need adjustments.

IX. Policy Related Research

92.   Research is one of the major communication
       activities that requires to be oriented by a
       national policy. What kind of research will be
       needed in order to benefit policy?

       Educational, scientific and cultural policies are
       being formulated these days on the basis of what-
       ever pertinent research may exist and on the basis
       of additional short-term research seeking informa-
       tion which is yet unavailable but happens to be
       indispensable. Perceptive probability analysis
       of essential realities by experienced people and
       enlightened intuition will, of necessity, have to
       substitute for completeness of scientific information.

93.   In Latin America, there has been over the last
       twenty years or so a considerable growth of the
       social sciences. This, however, has not always
       been accompanied by developing an adequate
       institutional infra-structure for research. For
       instance, many universities have schools of socio-
       logy but only a few of them provide their students
       with practical training in the application of
       scientific methods.

       In general, the necessity of research in the
       social sciences in the service of national develop-
       ment is barely starting to be perceived these days.
       Some years will probably go by before the activity
       becomes well established and understood.

                                                    . . .

In particular, if communication taken as a social science is yet an infant in most countries of the world, it is a newly-born creature in Latin America. Full-time communication researchers are very few yet and tend to be concentrated in a few countries.

94.   Research is needed before the policy comes into existence, during its implementation, and after it. In terms of degree of sophistication, the research needed for the first stage will probably be of an elementary nature compared with the research likely to be required for the third stage.

95.   It has been proposed in this paper that knowledge of the communication system and process is indispensable in order to be able to formulate the policy. Those terms being much too ample, however, the question for the experts is to suggest what kind of research is required now. What elements of the system have priority? Which aspects of the process need to be better known first? Which of the numerous possible variables are to be selected for prompt exploration? What about relationships within the system, the process, and between them?

96.   An elementary first step toward understanding the system would seem to be the elaboration of an inventory of media institutions; as mentioned earlier this tool can be built rather rapidly, but is only useful if going beyond non-analytical "warehouse" ennumeration.

97.   Another basic step may be to summarize, articulate and interpret all existing studies - local or

otherwise — that contain information of direct
interest to policy. Should this be done by each
country or — given that both studies and
researchers are few and that results can be
partially generalized to several countries in
the region — would it be preferable to launch
at once a regional effort?

98. Simple research could also attempt to identify
and describe and perhaps broadly analyze, in each
country, the existing partial policies for
communication. Inventories of the types of norms
prevailing and the kinds of instruments mostly
used could be drawn up rather easily.

99. The need for research activities accompanying
the various implementation phases of policies
has been stressed above.

100. Would it be desirable and possible to advise on
the use of certain research methods in preference
over others? Who is to conduct such research
in the service of policy? Which kinds of
institutions should assume the main technical
and financial responsibilities involved in the
inquiry?

. . .

Those are some of the issues on which the
experts are expected to provide guidance.