

Participatory Communication Section Report, IAMCR Taipei Conference (July 26-28, 2005)

The Participatory Communication Research (PCR) Section at the IAMCR Conference in Taipei, Taiwan suffered severely of no-shows. We accepted 16 abstracts out of 19 proposals, 13 authors announced their interest to file in full papers, but only 6 were able to come and present their papers. We were not the only ones hit by this phenomenon. In the whole conference, there were a considerable number of non-shows. Travel money is tight all over the world as we know. The total number of participants at the conference was around 250. Half of the participants came from the neighbouring countries.

Despite the number of no-shows, debates were lively at least in the PCR section. We had three sessions plus a business meeting, and all of these sessions gathered 13-18 participants. We “donated” two time slots to the HIV/AIDS working group, and one of our members (Rico Lie) presented his paper in this group. Our panels were chaired by Rico Lie, Thomas Tufte and Ullamaija Kivikuru, and the same ‘troika’ operated as commentators for papers.

The Conference theme “Media Panics: Freedom, Control and democracy in the Age of Globalisation” was not directly reflected in the themes of the papers, but indirect references to it frequented in the texts presented. This time, our themes were fairly traditional for the PCR Section: communication and social change, local communication in various forms, project descriptions, participatory aspects sought in new technology.

As usual, the discussions following the presentations were lively, and every now and then they departed quite far from the themes of the presentations. For example, there was a lengthy debate on definitions given to non-government organisations (NGOs) and the justification of such definitions.

The programme was as follows:

Session 1 Social Change and Choice

Thomas Jacobson & Leanne Chang
Temple University, USA
Measuring Community Change as Social Choice

Session 2 Community Media and Participation

Kurt Luger
University of Salzburg, Austria
In the Rhythm of the Himalayan Villages: Communicating sustainable development in the mountains of Nepal

Session 3 New Media, Old Habits, Old Media, New Habits

Ullamaija Kivikuru
University of Helsinki, Finland
Tsunami communication in Finland: New elements, but the mediated communication apparatus unshaken

Silvia Molina y Vedia
National Autonomous University of Mexico.
To Avoid Negative Repercussions of Panic Programming. An Alternative of Participatory
Communication Directed at Children

Business meeting

Election of Section Head and vice Section Head. The business meeting of the PCR Section was attended by just a handful of members. The meeting decided that a call for candidates should be sent out for the Section Head and Vice Section Head positions opening next year. The period covered will be 2006-09. Ullamaija Kivikuru is going to step down as the Head of Section in the IAMCR Conference in Cairo in July 2006. It was decided that the candidates should indicate their interest to the PCR postlist with a short mission statement telling about their plans and emphasis areas latest by the end of September. After that, a vote by email will follow during the month of October. The result will be confirmed in the PCR business meeting in Cairo.

The meeting expressed awareness that not all members can be reached by email, but in any an email election is a more democratic choice than an election carried out in a business meeting.

Cooperation with other sections and working groups. The business meeting emphasised a need to intensify the already existing cooperation with the Community Communication Section and the HIV/AIDS working group. The cooperation could be carried out by exchanging lists of abstracts in order to find out possibilities for joint sessions. In the long run, a merger with the Community Communication Section could be considered, although the main focus of the two sections is different. It was decided that the possibility for joint sessions should be indicated also in the Call for Papers for the coming conference in Cairo. The decision concerning interest for intensified cooperation was delivered to the Vice Head of the Community Communication Section Per Jauert already during the Taipei Conference.

The Section's name. The discussion concerning a potential change of the name of the Section started already in Porto Alegre. This discussion was continued in Taipei, but no suggestion was made so far. The group was unanimous that development and social change should appear in the name, but the formulation of specific suggestions turned out cumbersome. Consequently, it was decided that a wider platform is needed. A discussion on the postlist is going to be introduced during the coming months before the Cairo Conference, where the issue will be taken up again.

In this connection, the group indicated interest in analysing the emphasis areas in the past PCR Section programmes. However, it might be impossible to find all past conference programmes with paper titles, but efforts will be made to locate as many as possible in order to get a glimpse of potential changes in emphasis.

Abstracts on the website. The section's website (<http://www.socialsciences.wur.nl/cis/pcr/>) is run by Rico Lie, Wageningen University, The Netherlands. It has deliberately been kept quite simple to enable also such members to use it whose servers' capacity is limited. A full Conference programme is always found on the IAMCR website (www.IAMCR.net) However, it was decided that in the future, a programme for the PCR Section in the following IAMCR Conference will also be found on the Section website.

New journal. Members were reminded that a new journal (Communication for Development and Social Change), planned and implemented by the Section's members, is going to be launched in 2006. Suggestions for articles should be submitted to Jan Servaes (j.servaes@uq.edu.au).

So please submit to this postlist (participatory@sockom.helsinki.fi) or to me (ullamaija.kivikuru@helsinki.fi, I can transfer your text to the list, if you think it is better so) by the end of September your indication of interest in the Section Head's and Vice Section Head's positions together with short mission statements. The mission statement should include – very shortly, in free form – to which direction you would like to direct the Section's activities.

Regards,

Ullamaija Kivikuru