

Review of:
TUFTE, THOMAS
COMUNICACIÓN PARA EL CAMBIO SOCIAL.
LA PARTICIPACIÓN Y EL EMPODERAMIENTO COMO
BASE PARA EL DESARROLLO MUNDIAL

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The field of Communication for Social Change (CSC) has undergone major changes in the last decade (Dutta, 2011; Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte, 2008; 2006; Lennie and Tacchi, 2013; Mari Sáez, 2013; Nos Aldás et al., 2015; Wilkins et al., 2014) and the book *Comunicación para el cambio social* (Communication for Social Change) published in Spanish provides a valuable review of the discipline from a cultural perspective and a focus on citizens' agency.

As pointed out in the prologue by Víctor Mari and Eloísa Nos, Tufte's work stands out for its convergence between the Latin-American tradition and the Anglo-Saxon/European context, as well as for the endeavor in building bridges between the academia and civil society. This comprehensive perspective is manifest since the first chapter, where the author provides a review of CSC emphasizing that the 2005-2015 period has been particularly prominent for the discipline. In fact, during the last decade, the criticism of the Western paradigm of development began to be accompanied by proposals of alternatives, particularly from the epistemologies of the South, and the restoration of spaces for citizens' initiatives, from the contribution in institutional projects such as the Millennium Development Goals to interaction of social movements, particularly since 2011 protests.

Tufte's approach to CSC is built upon the bond of his theoretical perspective and his personal expertise in the field. His conceptual background on CSC is defined by the convergence between subaltern theory, gender and feminist studies, participatory approaches, cultural studies, and the role of narrative and construction of meaning. His personal records include several milestones that pinpointed his conception of CSC, among which are the influence of Freire and his pedagogy of liberation; popular movements of the 80s and the role of participatory communication; his experience at the UNESCO, UNDP and other NGOs; research projects carried out since the 90s on the role of popular culture and media programs in forming identities and configuring audiences in Brazil, South Africa and Denmark. His expertise covers three main areas –health communication, edu-entertainment, and citizen participation– that precisely comprise the three parts of the book, with a combination of institutional approaches, cultural industries and the role of citizens.

The first part of the book, dedicated to communication and health, includes two chapters where the author addresses, firstly, health communication as a discipline and, secondly, the specific case of communication about HIV/AIDS. In chapter 2, Tufte reviews the main achievements and challenges of Health Communication, officially established as discipline in 1975, which has been addressed mainly from Health Sciences, focusing on massive prevention campaigns, and to a lesser extent from Communication Sciences. Conversely, he supports a more holistic approach and interactive conception of the media and audiences in the construction of meaning. Particularly, he highlights the importance of contextualizing health communication in the actual setting of globalization, linking health to public policies, development and change, considering issues of inequality in order to configure “citizenships for health”. Chapter 3 deepens into the topic with the specific case of communication to combat HIV/AIDS, which has been mainly addressed as a matter of treatment rather than on prevention and, thus, most of the campaigns failed in their objectives of raising awareness. This scenario is further worsened by the stigma associated with this disease, connected with problems of poverty and inequalities, and therefore it is particularly necessary to address this communication by widening the merely biomedical approach or individual behaviors and adopt instead a CSC that considers issues of human rights and empowerment.

The second part of the book focuses on education-entertainment, or edu-entertainment (EE), with three chapters on the art of narrating stories strategically as a way to empower active audiences. In chapter 4, Tufte reviews the concept of EE understood as communication that entertains while it educates

and he groups different approaches to EE in three generations: the first is based on social marketing and addresses EE as a tool for conveying a message; the second understands problems within structural inequalities and tackles EE as a tool for social change; finally, the third adds the need to define problems as power relations and, therefore, it addresses EE as a form of popular culture that citizens may identify with and then promote debate and collective action on inequalities and injustices. Based on a study of several journal articles on EE, in chapter 5 the author argues that although it is a strategy for social change, many EE initiatives keep a functionalist approach towards communication with interventions limited to seeking changes in individual behaviors, instead of leveraging on the potential of narrative for social change. From these considerations, Tufte suggests that in order to understand and work on the potential of EE for transformation it would be necessary to explore three notions: subject, culture, and social change. In this regard, chapter 6 provides a reception analysis of a specific EE format, the soap opera, based on mediation theory and audience ethnography in order to understand how these types of communication contribute to the construction of meaning through its potential for promoting an emotional engagement, fostering debate even on controversial issues, as well as socializing with new way of life and articulating “cultural citizenships”.

In the third and last part, the book delves into CSC from a citizen perspective and its value for agency, participation and resistance in a mediatised era, where citizens carry out processes of social change with communicative practices as a fundamental pillar. Chapter 7 addresses CSC by connecting the concept of *mediapolis* –mediated public sphere as a space of civic action in the context of new media– and human (in)security, emphasizing that cultures of fear are embedded in public discourses and it is therefore necessary to reflect upon it and generate a more empathic communication in order to involve citizens in the social changes needed in global contexts. This issue is further elaborated in chapter 8 with the case of the Tanzanian NGO Femina HIP that originated to offer health information and HIV prevention, but it has become a media and communication platform driven by civil society to promote youth democratic participation and a more inclusive development in the country. According to Tufte, this is an example of *sphericules* of civil society –micro public spheres from where it is possible to express oneself and to exercise the right of citizen participation– through EE and popular culture, so that civil society can build its strategies for social change. In chapter 9, the author proposes the inclusion of a diachronic dimension of CSC, addressing the issue of public memory as a rhetorical, political, and discursive strategy in order to

translate the past into a significant present. In the case of social movements, the experiences of exclusion –since XIX century to the 2011 wave of protests– bring legacy and stories that are memories of agency, participation, and resistance. These are hidden resources that are necessary to comprehend in order to develop strategies and narratives of CSC in the present with the purpose of promoting a better future. Finally, the ending chapter 10 addresses the latest communication trends in the new context after the Arab Spring. The revitalization of social movements since 2011 has driven the creation of spaces of communication and participation that arise bottom up claiming more deliberative and participatory processes of change and development, which pose great challenges for public, social and academic institutions that should integrate these new demands and modes of understanding power relations into their proposals and dynamics. As concluding remarks on CSC, Tufte points out some of its main challenges in the actual changing context: 1) A profound debate on the concept of development; 2) Recognition of the power struggles as a basic context also for governance; 3) Recognition of new spaces of debate, participation, and agency; 4) Dealing with polyphony as the communicative condition of our time and 5) An increasing articulation of citizen tactics to influence on power structures.

The distinctive significance of Tufte's work relies on the comprehensive perspective he provides on CSC, bonding approaches from different and actually international traditions, and both conceptual and field expertise. In this regard, *Comunicación para el cambio social* is a relevant reading for academics, students and communication professionals interested not only in reviewing the evolution of CSC from an international perspective, but also in approaching the latest challenges of the field and engaging in a profound reflection on its potential for promoting grassroots and inclusive social change that consider current structural, cultural and power relations.

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