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*Book Review*

***Saving the World: A Brief History of Communication for Development and Social Change***

**By: Emilie McAnany (2012)**

**Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press**

**181 pages, including index and reference lists**

**\$27.00 paperback**

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**Overview**

Emilie McAnany published his text *Saving the World: A Brief History of Communication for Development and Social Change* as part of a University of Illinois commissioned multi-volume series on the history of communication and communication studies in 2012. McAnany uses his more than 50 years of scholarly communication research and international development practice to trace the history of Communication for Development (C4D) from its inception post World War II (WWII) with the Marshall plan to the current time, through four major paradigms. Put simply, this book illustrates the use of communication by development practitioners as it has evolved over time, culminating in a series of recommendations by the author based on the *lessons learned* associated with this history.

The text begins with an introductory framing in which the author discusses his stance on and role in the subject as well as his assumptions, biases, and professional experience. McAnany (2012) operationalizes the term C4D as the use and role of communication in international development and social change (pp. 3-6). Development and social change are further defined by the author as the improvement of a person's standard of living as a result of either institutional or societal / individual

level changes, respectively. The development field, in the context of McAnany's thesis, includes U.S. government departments, such as USAID, inter-governmental bodies, e.g., the United Nations (UN), and private or faith-based Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which implement development programs. Early in the text, McAnany mentions the disagreements over terminology and other issues amongst practitioners of international development, but states firmly that his intent is not to be distracted by differing semantics and political orientations, but rather focus on the subject at hand.

According to McAnany, the four historical C4D paradigms were born from and influenced by three theoretical frameworks as espoused by Daniel Lerner, Everett Rogers, and Wilbur Schramm, respectively. These theoretical foundations and their importance to each paradigm are described in detail as the text moves through the history of C4D. The first paradigm discussed is the *modernization-diffusion paradigm*, which began in the years following WWII. During this epoch of C4D, McAnany describes the power of mass media infrastructure, of its expansion, and of subsequent media campaigns it emanated to catalyze national development efforts. Next is the *dependency, or critical, paradigm* emerging in the 1960s and early 1970s. This

period was characterized by top-down programming through a political economy framework which benefitted the program implementers but included little to no local input or buy-in, hence its name.

According to McAnany, ascension of the *participatory paradigm* began in the 1980s and remains prominent today. The participatory paradigm is one in which C4D activities are built around a two-way relationship, with an active and engaged audience cooperating with program implementers to bring about development as a team. Finally, McAnany discusses the emerging paradigm of *social entrepreneurship*. This paradigm, although not yet dominant, is quickly expanding to become an important force in development. In this approach, C4D activities emerge from within the specific social systems and locales which face development challenges; they are not brought in from outside agencies or external sources. Such communication activities are built around a business model intended to be self-sustaining with no need for reliance on outside funding or inputs for survival.

The various paradigms along with their successes and failures are presented in chronological order by corresponding decades, and woven together with the author's conclusions as to why each paradigm succeeded or failed to the extent it has, as well as how their performances are and should be measured. The text culminates in a series of recommendations for future C4D activities based on the author's interpretation of *lessons learned* over time.

### **Evaluation**

The aims of this text are to provide a history of C4D activities during the last five decades; offer insight into the practical, theoretical, and historical contexts of various C4D successes and failures; discuss how the

impacts of C4D are determined and what that means for the field; and put forth an academically rigorous set of recommendations for future C4D programs. McAnany firmly accomplishes these goals across his eight chapters.

The major historical paradigms presented in the text are richly detailed and thoroughly developed. A commendable job is done by the author of diving deeply into each paradigm; presenting the historical context of the paradigm's creation and birth; how it grew to be widely accepted and utilized as the prevailing methodology; the impact of the paradigm over time and what it achieved; as well as the failures and limitations of the paradigm and how that led to the reinvention and overall evolution of the C4D field. This approach enabled McAnany to make several sound and thoroughly referenced claims as to both how and why the field of C4D evolved over time. By providing an exhaustive context of the situation, the reader gains a robust understanding of the nuanced theories, applications, and history of C4D.

The strengths of this work lie in its judicious use of reference material, ranging from real-world practical examples and project reports to theoretical suppositions and peer-reviewed publications. Including such extensive referential material creates a history lesson which does much more than simply recount what transpired over the decades. McAnany presents the evolution of C4D as embedded within a broad but rigorous academic context while exhaustively linking said evolution to the events, publications, and milestones that shaped it.

A notable weakness of the text worth mentioning is that McAnany assumes readers are familiar with some of the concepts and phenomena about which he writes. The concepts, however, may not be readily accessible to someone new to the

fields of communication or international development, versus readers already well-versed in their respective jargon, study, and practice. At times, McAnany's writing can be rather dense and academic, which may create a barrier for readers less acclimated to this style of writing.

### **Recommendation**

Although this text is not centered around agricultural education and extension specifically, it does hold great relevance and value to both theory and practice within the field and is highly recommended to anyone working, studying, or researching at the intersection of communication and international development. First, the text is exhaustively referenced using a diverse body of peer-reviewed, governmental, and well-known theoretical sources. As such, it serves as an extensively detailed *literature review* for both the field of communication and its practice in international development and related change efforts during the past 60-odd years. This creates an ideal research node for scholarly inquiry into the subject

matter by connecting readers to an array of relevant works in communication and international development. The text includes an extensive index section, making the quick reference of specific phenomena and follow up with related resources easily accessible. In addition to its value as a reference, the text is recommended to planners designing international development programs with a C4D framework or component. The scope of historical and evolutionary causation described in the text, could serve as a valuable foundation for any C4D-related program design going forward. The recommendations and lessons which McAnany presents carry with them immense insight for the practice and use of communication in development.

### **Reference**

McAnany, E. (2012). *Saving the world: A brief history of communication for development and social change*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.