Good governance is a critical component in attaining human development, poverty reduction and peace-building in less developed countries (United Nations’ Millennium Declaration, 2000). Good governance reform movements, where the goal is to build the capacity of both citizens and governments to work jointly for reforms that will improve the livelihoods of citizens, are becoming more prominent around the world. When used in the context of good governance, the concept of strategic communication encompasses the actors, organizations, infrastructure and systems that are necessary to ensure “a two-way flow of information and ideas between the government and the citizenry” (Mozammel & Odugbemi, 2005, p. 9).

As policymaking and security become more complex, typically, governance is defined in terms of the actions and outcomes considered necessary to promote and spread it.

Good governance is effective, equitable and promotes rule of law. It also ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources.

UNDP, n.d.

This perspective often views governance as dependent on positive, sustainable, open relationships between government agencies and NGOs or CSOs (civil society organizations) as well as private sector organizations, and a knowledgeable public who can actively participate in their own governance.

As a process, strategic communication fosters support for governance reform by influencing opinion, attitude, and behavior change among leaders and policymakers (political will), mid-level bureaucrats (organizational will), and citizens (public will) (Odugbemi, 2010). Thus critical communication pathways are constituted between individuals, organizations and institutions, large and small, such as dialogue between government organizations and community groups or collaborations between information rights organizations and the media. Although the language is optimistic, this space is necessarily conflicted and problematic both practically and theoretically.

Strategic communication has been defined as “communication that is aligned with a company’s overall strategy to improve its strategic positioning” (Argenti, Howell & Beck, 2005). Strategic
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communication has also been examined by researchers focusing on communicative practices in areas such as public relations (Waters & Lemanski, 2011), political campaigns (Holbert & Geidner, 2009), military campaigns and issues (Ward, 2011), and corporate marketing (Kitchen, Brignell, Li, & Jones, 2004). This practice-oriented approach to communication has been critiqued by scholars such as Deetz (2001) for being in the service of the managerial class at the expense of other organizational constituencies, and Habermas (1979) for its sometimes manipulative and non-transparent purposes. More recently, however, the concept of strategic communication has been conceived as neither inherently good nor bad, especially as the practice has become commonplace in agencies and organizations focused on the public good (e.g., Facchinetti, 2004). Research in this arena ranges from traditionally focused marketing-style campaign assessments to much larger projects that rigorously investigate the actors, actions and interpenetrating systems for their values, implementation practices and outcomes as well as other concerns (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčić & Sriramesh, 2007).

Other constituencies that have begun to explore strategic communication include civil society groups and international development organizations (c.f. Botan & Taylor, 2005; Durán-Bravo & Fernández-Fuentes, 2010). Organizations involved in issues such as poverty reduction, health outcomes and good governance are currently creating new approaches to strategic communication as it is practiced and researched. This community retains the purposive connotation of strategic communication, but these scholar–practitioners are less focused on the communication of a particular organization and more concerned with engaging multiple organizations—large and small—to improve specified outcomes. This perspective creates a much larger framework for implementation than may be traditionally understood, and requires a new model for analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The strategic communication framework we use for good governance is a process that connects agency with institutions and mediated communication to produce both individual and collective action. Institutions in this sense are considered to be instantiated in communication practices (McPhee & Zaug, 2009; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). This view, sometimes referred to as communication–as-constitutive, posits that communication generates the realities of organizations such as culture, power, networks, and the structure–agency relation (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009; Banks & Riley, 2006; Eisenberg & Riley, 2000). This conception of strategic communication is informed by Giddens’s (1984) action theory perspective where human agency and social structure are not seen as two separate concepts or constructs, but as duality of structure. His analytical tool, structuration, explores the ways in which social systems are produced and reproduced through communication in social interaction. By positioning strategic communication within structuration theory, we are using a theoretical lens that is grounded in human interaction, focuses on the interpenetration of multiple systems, takes it as given that the complexity of systems of action often results in contradictions and unintended consequences, believes in the agency of actors, and features an ability to transcend time and space in human communication (Giddens, 1991; Poole, Seibold and McPhee, 1985; Riley, 1983).

The varying uses of structuration concepts have been innovative and demonstrate its expansive and elastic nature. Subsequent to the development of structuration theory, Giddens (1991) elaborated on the social conditions of late modern society and focused on social constructs that are brought into relief in a rapidly changing, mass mediated, economically interdependent and networked world. Issues such as identity, security, skills, politics, and ecosystems all play a role in diverse but intersecting landscapes in Giddens’s desire for a progressive life world (an agent–centered social philosophy somewhat analogous to Habermas’s public sphere). Thus Giddens’s work offers significant guidelines for a framework that sees strategic communication as a set of key constructs bound together in a purposive agenda; in this case with the progressive reform agenda of good governance.
Recently, though, the production, consumption, and relational nature of deliberative organizational- and systems-level communication processes have been altered by a number of dramatic societal changes. These include the increased speed of message and information development and transmission, as well as the proliferation of channels and platforms; a society that is growing more dense and diverse through urbanization and migration; organizational structures that have a great deal of variation in form and boundaries; and power shifts in governments, science, humanities and the arts. In this environment, the complexity of systems and the speed of change create both challenges and opportunities for reformists and others interested in strategic, planned change.

From a strategic, large-scale perspective, the praxis of human communication—the habitual nature of social relations and the means through which actors learn social behaviors and strategies (rules and resources in his parlance)—provide critical features for analysis (Giddens, 1986). The deeply ingrained behaviors and relationships found in various forms of social activity (e.g., families, communities, organizations, large governmental institutions) are especially important when researchers are attempting to identify their means of reproduction. These patterns may constitute engaging, innovative cultures that nurture great ideas or they might produce abusive, harassing organizations where behaviors that would not be tolerated elsewhere are taken for granted. In the case of government organizations and bureaucracies where mid-level civil servants outlast the leaders—and their initiatives—it is extremely important to investigate their rules and sources of power. Organizational change efforts and their strategic communication plans are thus often about altering or disrupting the underlying generative mechanisms that produce and reproduce the social structures that allow organizational members to be indifferent to change efforts.

A strategic communication perspective also allows us to examine the positioning of the existing relationships between agency and power focusing on the conditions under which actors perceive they “can do otherwise,” and use their communication skills (agency) and knowledge from communication programs (rules and resources) to enhance their communication and social capital to advocate for, and effect, change. This may require, for example, an analysis of the embeddedness of disciplinary power (in a Foucauldian sense) in the personal or organizational lives of bureaucrats or leaders and a sophisticated examination of systemic resource allocations, because straightforward persuasive appeals may not be motivational even if they are credible and emotionally appealing.

A strategic repositioning of power can enhance opportunities for citizens to participate in the creation of information used in governance, and create a two-way flow of information. In this sense all members of NGOs or SCOs and interested citizens, can see themselves as important members of the interlocking systems of governance. They can then use this information, spread it through sustainable networks, and advocate for change. This is an example of individuals building up their resources, or what is known as communication capital4.

A goal of communication processes should also be to increase the transparency of information produced by institutions, including knowledge about its ownership (Fairbanks, Plowman & Rawlins, 2007). This builds the communicative capacity of the system. Similarly, communication capacity can be built by growing collaborations and networks of people engaged in reform. Collective action, as a communicative phenomenon, always includes: “(1) identifying and connecting people who share a common private interest(s) in a public good, (2) communicating messages to these people, and (3) coordinating, integrating, or synchronizing individuals’ contributions” (Flanigan, Stohl & Bimber, 2006, p. 32).

Strategic communication for governance helps combine knowledgeable, creative endeavors, such as issue framing and messaging, with the collaboration and coordination skills necessary for operational activities, such as coalition building and network development. In this conception, strategic communication is more than themes and messages or a campaign—it requires the examination of existing coalitions and policy negotiations; it calls for an understanding of institutional positioning
(McPhee and Zaug, 2009), and entails the analysis of structures such as competing networks, media argument frames, and organizational cultural changes (Riley, 2005).

Project Overview

Expert Interview Methodology

To better understand the strategic communication needs and challenges in the developing world, our partners in the CommGap program at the World Bank conducted in-depth interviews with regional communication professionals from governments, the private sector, and the World Bank who are all engaged in governance reform efforts in some capacity through their work. A total of 51 phone or face-to-face interviews were conducted with individuals from 17 countries in six regions, including: Africa (Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania), the Middle East and North Africa (Morocco), Eastern Europe (Bosnia, Serbia, Romania), Latin America and the Caribbean (Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago), East Asia (Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand), and South Asia (India). The semi-structured interviews also provided input on the most critical governance reform skills and the target audience for a communication and governance reform workshop. The interviews were transcribed, and we analyzed the data both through a structurationist lens to identify the interlocking systems issues and through a thematic analysis looking for key issues (e.g., challenges and opportunities) (Boyatzis, 1998), which is the first step toward a larger content analysis study (see Roberts, 1997) to be conducted during the next phase of this research project.

Analysis

Analysis of the interview data showed the connections among communication-related governance challenges, the skills required to address these challenges, and the target audience for a communication and governance reform workshop that would teach participants the knowledge-base and skills required to address these challenges.

Communication-Related Governance Challenges

Participants were asked to identify key governance challenges that were consistent with their current experience in governance reform implementation. Responses were wide ranging, but four key themes emerged.

1. Challenges related to lack of political will. Respondents talked about the lack of political support for reform. Some spoke of vested interests and political agendas that got in the way of supporting needed reform. Others spoke of political promises that did not lead to significant reform. Still others referred to lack of transparency as a challenge. Among all of the challenges, political will was perceived as the most important challenge. Several made comments such as this: “Political will is the apex of the challenges.”

2. Challenges related to lack of organizational will. Often related to political will is the lack of organizational/administrative will. One respondent said, “Political will and administrative will are key challenges. Communication plays an important role in providing links from policy to reform implementation.” Of all of the comments, a large majority focused on challenges within the participants’ organizations. A frequently mentioned issue was resistance from middle managers. Some claimed there were no incentives for middle managers to change; others suggested that middle
managers had little knowledge or understanding of the reforms. Some mentioned a lack of leadership support, resource deficiencies, lack of continuity of government personnel, and sub-par coordination and collaboration. Overall, many respondents seemed to believe their organizations lacked the capacity to effectively implement governance reform.

3. Challenges related to a lack of public will. Several respondents mentioned a lagging engagement from their citizenry. This often showed up as citizen indifference or reform fatigue. Some respondents claimed that citizens lacked voice in the system or that there was no force to unite the people in support of governance reform. In some cases, interviewees spoke about public will as an ephemeral concept. For example, in some countries there is no push for reform and no consensus about what government should do. One interviewee said there is little understanding of public policy reforms and no request for accountability. Some felt that there really was no such thing as public opinion because some societies are so fragmented.

4. Lack of communication with the public. The fourth theme links organizational challenges to the lack of public will. Many respondents identified that their organizations needed to cast a broader communication net with a larger set of stakeholders. Some mentioned there was no concerted effort to communicate with the public. Others mentioned the lack of media management by reform managers.

Individual Skills Needed to Address Governance Challenges

The interviewees believed reform-related organizational skills were underdeveloped. Again, these data were wide ranging, but could be categorized under six themes, as follows.

1. Political, historical, and intercultural environment. Participants seemed to comprehend the importance of understanding the context of their reform initiatives. One participant stated they must know “how to maneuver and navigate the political landscape.” Another noted, “Reform is linked to politics so an understanding of the evolution of the political culture is key.” Several mentioned the importance of intercultural differences while others went beyond the typical intercultural concerns. For example, an interviewee claimed:

   Another example is Nigeria and their secret societies. They have parallel systems of government run by various societies and clans . . . these matter more to Nigerians than existing things. So what one needs to do is know a country quite well. If [you] want to change systems and individuals, there are other roadmaps that aren’t known and need to be discovered.

2. Coalition building and stakeholder analysis. Many mentioned the importance of coalition building. For instance, one interviewee said it was critical to build coalitions that would address vested interests. Another said:

   Coalition building is key . . . trying to engage people in collective action is needed to support successful implementation. If there are no strong coalitions, communication may not get far. Building strategic interest groups are (sic) essential so people can take the message to the rest of the society.

There was widespread agreement that there would be a need for individuals from nonprofit organizations and think tanks that focus on reform and advocacy, academics, private sector communication consultants, and members of CSOs to engage in building communication capacity.
Others mentioned that members of trade associations or unions, communication professionals in donor organizations (e.g., DFID), people who worked in government agencies, those who interact with the media, senior political and civil service officials, and monitoring and evaluation specialists should be educated about the importance of communication. There were comments about adversaries; there were examples of counter-movements to stop reform because it means fewer jobs to be doled out under the current system, or lobbying by business to slow reforms and talk of people who feared their opponents. This, of course, gave rise to the desire for fearless individuals—people who would be passionate proponents for change. Related to coalition building is stakeholder analysis. Several mentioned the importance of analyzing and understanding the multiple stakeholders who are related to the reform. Stakeholder analysis is valuable for identifying key interests, sources of power, perceptions, and media preferences. This analysis would be an essential first step for trust building, knowing how to best frame issues, and learning how to manage conflict with various stakeholders.

3. Change management. Central to implementing reform is an understanding of change management. Several interviewees told stories of complications that were perhaps not totally unexpected but were still frustrating. One interviewee discussed the link between understanding the stakeholders and change management:

In terms of information and changes between cultures, Afghanistan is an example. They get their information from the radio and TV but if you dig deeper, you see what really influences them to change are discussions inside the family unit when you want to reflect what they do and influence change.

4. Monitoring and evaluation. Interviewees were also concerned about research and evaluation skills. Many were interested in gathering data and analyzing metrics. One interviewee said, “The use of a metrics and evaluation framework is critical to track progress, identify constraints, and ensure productive results of work undertaken.”

5. Problem solving and strategic-level thinking. Interviewees were interested in developing a more strategic approach for their reform work. Several mentioned the importance of strategic communication. Others spoke about the importance of developing problem-solving skills.

6. Role of professional communicators. Another interesting theme revolved around communication as a role, a profession. One respondent noted that communication professionals may be important, but depending on where you go, for example South Asia, in 8 out of 10 cases, the communications guy is 17 years old and they send him out to get sandwiches for meetings. At best he puts out a press release or two. This isn’t the problem-solving coalition base you want to be dealing with.

Other respondents made a similar point, noting that communication professionals are undervalued, so the best audience for education interventions are high-caliber decision makers and senior managers from any functional position, not just communication, with the power to influence change. Others, however, noted communication professionals are not the people who need to learn that communication is central to governance reform. Some interviewees were concerned with the role of journalists. They noted that their regions were quite different from the West in that they lacked positions like science writer because the journalists tended to be generalists, not specialists like in the West.
The Communication and Governance Project

Out of the analysis of governance reform efforts and the communication and governance interview data, an executive course in communication and governance reform was developed along with a five-year program to build capacity and sustainability in governance reform. This section gives an overview of the long-range project on communication and government reform with our C@C research group at USC’s Annenberg School in partnership with the Annenberg School at University of Pennsylvania and CommGap and WBI of the World Bank Group.

The program’s goal is to ensure that governance reforms can be advanced and consolidated over the long term by those with the most at stake, namely, citizens of the countries themselves, whether through government or civil society. The program contains five interlocking and mutually supportive components that promote coalition building for governance reform through a self-reinforcing cycle of capacity building, networking, and knowledge generation. These five components are as follows.

An executive course in communication and governance reform. This component will directly strengthen the capacity of communication and other professionals in supporting reform efforts in developing countries.

A network of students, scholars, and practitioners. This component will bring together networks of executive course graduates, scholars and practitioners. These networks will develop research agendas, foster talent, build ties with local, regional and international organizations, and improve their members’ capacity to enhance and employ their expertise.

Peer-partnered research and analysis. This component seeks to develop North–South peer-partnered research by creating teams of early-career researchers working on issues of communication and governance reform in developing countries, and helping them make an impact on the broader conversation about governance and development.

Knowledge leadership, generation and sharing. This component extracts and shares knowledge from the other parts of the program. It acts as a global think tank on governance and communication issues, helping to lead the broader conversation on governance reform through policy-oriented research and convening discussion.

Operations-oriented advice. Drawing particularly upon the knowledge leadership and network elements of the program, this aspect connects organizations with hands-on, practical, operational advice on the communication-based aspects of governance reform.

Curriculum Development

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the development of the executive course, “World Bank–Annenberg Executive Course in Communication and Governance Reform.” The initial phase of the program focuses on two regions in particular, Africa and the Middle East.

The concept for the course was originally rooted in the Bank’s use of political economy approaches to better understand stakeholders and their reform contexts. The goal of the executive course is to move from simply analyzing policy to locating support that is critical to implementation. The World Bank’s broad experience shows one or more of the following issues produce serious challenges to successful governance: the need to strengthen political will and increase client ownership; overcoming bureaucratic resistance, especially from middle managers; managing a...
plurality of vested interests; confronting hostile public opinion; addressing collective action problems; and cultivating citizen demand for accountability. The interview data analyses generally supported this viewpoint.

We see these issues as problems that can be addressed through a strategic communication lens and by the structuring of communication capital and capacity. This is accomplished, for example, by building effective and efficient information systems and cultivating new networks of anti-corruption supporters and coalitions that can help address collective action problems and ultimately expand the existing spaces for reform.

The curriculum for the course was developed through a collaborative effort of the three project partners: the C@C research group at USC’s Annenberg School in partnership with the Annenberg School at University of Pennsylvania and CommGap and WBI units of the World Bank Group. This took place over the nine-month period preceding the course pilot, which was held in July 2011 at the World Bank headquarters in Washington, DC. The World Bank put out a call for applications to individuals and organizations they thought might be interested. They received over 400 applications and through a rigorous process of review, 35 individuals were chosen to attend the pilot: 11 from North Africa and the Middle East, 11 from Africa, and three from other regions. Ten individuals representing development and donor organizations around the world (DFID, World Bank) also attended the pilot course.

Learning objectives called for the participants to be able to carry out the following tasks.

*Interpret governance diagnostics and political economy analysis.* Participants were expected to gain the knowledge and skills to become informed consumers of political economy analyses and governance diagnostics and be able to draw out adaptive, non-technical challenges amenable to communication-based solutions.

*Craft and implement strategies for multi-stakeholder coalition building in support of reform.* Participants were expected to be able to secure political will through broad leadership support for change; gain support of public sector middle managers; address vested interests by building coalitions of pro-change influentials; transform indifferent or even hostile public opinion into support for reform; and instigate citizen demand for good governance and accountability.

*Provide implementation support.* Participants were also expected to gain knowledge and skills in facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue and negotiation toward a durable agreement; set up mechanisms for continuous gathering of political context updates for reform managers and country offices of international organizations; identify and draw on necessary high-quality expertise for implementation; and identify the necessary expertise mix for implementation.

*Apply monitoring and evaluation frameworks.* Last, participants were expected to be able to gain familiarity and skills in the actual use of evaluation frameworks, embedding monitoring and evaluation frameworks in the upstream planning processes; set up monitoring mechanisms to track outputs; and evaluate whether or not communication and governance interventions contributed to desired outcomes.

The 10-day course was organized around five key areas of learning:

1. communication and governance
2. sustaining coalitions and networks for governance
3. traditional media and social media and the fifth estate
4. metrics and evaluation frameworks
5. communication and self-mastery.
Good Governance and Strategic Communication

We review each area below in reference to the key learning areas and then reflect on the workshop as a whole and the process of curriculum development going forward.

Communication and Governance

The first module for the workshop focused on governance in the development context, specifically the central role of communication in the governance process. Participants learned about governance as a contested arena in development, including its evolution from a narrow view of public administration, exclusively focused on supply-side factors to today’s much broader governance agenda that seeks to incorporate demand-side considerations along traditional concerns. Additionally, participants learned that good governance can only be realized and sustained if public sector consumers (stakeholders and civil society) are involved in the decision-making process—whether via direct participation and/or accountability mechanisms.

Key concepts like public opinion and influence were reviewed through a communication lens. Political economy analysis helped participants develop a deeper knowledge of the “what, why, and how” of reform including the existing pathologies, the origin of the pathologies, and strategies for addressing the pathologies to successfully implement reform. Participants applied the principles with concrete examples of a bus system improvement project in Dhaka and journalistic methods in India.

Participants also learned to do stakeholder analysis and mapping, which helped them identify the winners and losers, the strong supporters and the powerful opponents of reform. Stakeholder analysis is one way of putting communication at the center of decision-making in organizations and society. It requires strategic communication planning and poses questions such as: Which stakeholders might best carry the message? How do we reach younger citizens? What members of coalitions are networked with the individuals who are likeminded but not involved in the reform?

Sustaining Coalitions and Networks for Governance

The second module emphasized the process of building coalitions to benefit reform efforts and sustain them through technologies and best practices that enhance knowledge sharing. A case study of coalition building in support of procurement reform policy in the Philippines offered participants a practical example of this process, and a related exercise gave them a chance to think about the initial phase of coalition building in their local contexts as an extension of stakeholder mapping and analysis. A presentation on sustaining coalitions introduced technologies and best practices that aid organizational knowledge sharing processes, which have the potential to turn coalitions built around a single reform into long-term information sharing networks. Participants had the opportunity to think about their own role in building lasting networks through an exercise on network leadership.

Traditional Media and Social Media (the Fifth Estate)

These sessions began with a focus on the media as one of the most important sources of data—on a macro, global scale and on a micro–local level. Lectures included a public diplomacy perspective on global media as well as a media use and messaging perspective that discussed the power of narratives and images and introduced concrete topics like message stickiness, framing and priming. Participants also focused on social media as a check on governments and corporations as well as the transformative impact of social media on traditional notions of information and audience. A mini case study was presented on a mobile social media research project called Mobile Voices as an example of citizen empowerment. The importance of building relationships with media outlets was a theme across all sessions. Recently, work by Jacobson and Jang (2002) has explored how the media can contribute
to a global civil society through promoting peace as well as by providing coverage of democratic struggles. Taylor (2000) argued that media, especially independent media, are critical in helping activist organizations become involved in setting public agendas and stimulating public discourse.

**Metrics and Evaluation Frameworks**

This module highlighted one of the most important aspects of a strategic communication approach: metrics and evaluation. Participants learned how to develop measures for monitoring and evaluation and how to collect the data to enable these analyses. The module encompassed the traditional focus on monitoring and evaluation that is required in the ‘donor world,’ but with a twist. This set of elements develops the research on governance by setting up a web portal for the course and training participants to contribute data to a wiki. They were encouraged to be innovative at piloting and testing their own metrics and diagnostic tools and becoming what we call “field knowledge workers” who innovate, test and spread good practices. Participants discussed data that are needed for successful strategic communication, and discussed questions such as: How will this data be collected? What metrics should be used? How should progress be monitored? How shall the reform efforts be evaluated?

**Communication and Self-Mastery**

The final module centered on the process of building communication capital for participants as individuals. Leadership, vision and framing were explored through a scenario exercise that developed strategic thinking and foresight. A session on middle managers discussed how to deal with resistance to organizational change followed by a session on communication as risk mitigation and crisis communication. Finally, a lecture on negotiation and dialogue presented the idea of emotional intelligence and the communication tools and strategies that can be useful when dealing with “wicked” or intractable problems that are often made worse by the challenges of interpersonal and intercultural communication.

The course ended by analyzing a difficult case study about a fictitious country where most land is owned on a communal basis, with tenurial arrangements driven by traditional practices. However, due to changing economic and social conditions, customary land management is increasingly under pressure. Current law restricts the sale or lease of 80% of the country’s arable land, thus stifling growth. Corruption is rampant, land laws are unclear at best and contradictory at worst, dispute resolution and enforcement mechanisms lack capacity and legal force, and administration is over-centralized and inefficient. There are frequent conflicts between municipal governments and traditional leaders over the authority to allocate land. Many powerful local bureaucrats, judges, and lawyers benefit immensely from the current land tenure confusion, charging inflated fees in order to navigate the convoluted land laws and land administrative systems. Many politicians continue to take advantage of the ambiguous land tenure system by strong-arming local officials and judges to provide them with enough land to use as a patronage resource. As a result, property rights are weak or unclear, and this rural insecurity has become a major obstacle to national development. Participants were also assigned roles and asked to apply the knowledge and skills that they had learned during the workshop.

**Discussion**

Increasing pressure is being felt around the world for good governance. Good governance is characterized by highly participative, two-way communication linking citizens and the government. Drawing on Giddens (1984), poor governance is a social system that is produced and reproduced in communication. Top-down, non-participative communication and corruption often characterize poor governance. Institutions are instantiated in engrained communication practices. To disrupt
these patterns, reform managers must understand the deep structures of production, consumption, and relational organizational and systems-level processes.

For example, the governance challenge of collusion requires a solution involving transparency-building incentives. These incentives must be designed through ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders. This requires research efforts and stakeholder analysis to learn how the current system is produced and reproduced as well as a clear understanding of stakeholder values and assumptions. For example, what rules and norms reproduce the current behaviors what would count as evidence to a key stakeholder that the system was changing to become more transparent?

Interventions by reform managers require a strategic approach; one that links macro-level issues to micro-level actions. Reform managers must learn to be adept at building political will, organizational will, and public will—all issues that require increasing communicative capacity systemically and institutionally by first developing communication capital. Very few people were described as truly capable of the kind of self-mastery that can leverage the intersection of highly developed personal communication skills and successful engagement with governments, agencies and civil society organizations.

Interviewees made numerous comments about both the institutionalized roles of communication specialists and the need for communication skills in other roles. Individuals in both positions were seen as both helpful and inept, since being a communication specialist appears to confer no special skills in some regions. The resources that people have available to them to implement reform vary greatly.

Interviewees were consistent in their belief that middle managers are the keepers of resistant behaviors and while they could articulate the motivations and mental models that underpin these behaviors, they were less able to discuss how these practices were sustained over time. They also observed that most mass media systems remain powerful entities that can either enable or prevent change. Further analysis will be needed to better understand the deeper structuring processes of strategic communication in institutional reform efforts. Field-level data will need to be collected over several years, across state and regional contexts to uncover these patterns.

The interview showed that many citizens have little knowledge of the reform efforts in their countries or insight into the bureaucracies that sustain their governments. This lack of knowledge allows those in power to reproduce the surface-level structures that dominate their lives such as improper taxes or the unequal application of laws. Only a few country representatives mentioned the power of corporations, which is always a key institutional power broker in the West. So the question remains, why is this the case? Are those structures invisible or unmentionable? Also, remarkably few interviewees brought up the role of social media and new technology. This is likely due to the lack of communication technology and Internet access in many rural areas in Africa and the Middle East, yet there is a good deal of information on the growing role of mobile technology in many of these countries. These interviews were conducted during the same time frame as the “Arab Spring” 2011 movements. Initial media reports indicated that social media such as Facebook and Twitter played a significant role in the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings and although it is likely that their role was more nuanced than initially reported, empirical research indicates a significant role was played by social media (Lotan et al., 2011). We expect that the growth of smartphones and platforms will increase the interest in social media over time.

**Reflections on the Experience and Moving Forward**

We did brief exit interviews with a subset of the participants to get their perspective on the first iteration of the course. Although a systematic analysis of this data is still underway, one key theme that has emerged is the value of peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing in this kind of course. These individuals from different parts of the world each use a localized communication perspective to confront the challenges of governance reform in their own specific local contexts, but the challenges they are confronting have many common qualities and their work to confront these challenges has both local and global application.
The projects director for a Filipino think tank said:

A lot of us are somewhat myopic in terms of our outlook, having practiced advocacy communication or governance reform only in our own respective territories. Being able to hear the experiences and stories of others . . . It helps you adopt a more global feeling in terms of approaches to advocacy communication and governance reform.

A PR spokesperson for the Romanian government also noted, “Although we come from different countries, different cultures with different histories, I identified common aspects and common challenges when it comes to reform. The transition process looks very similar and very difficult.”

This 10-day program was not designed to replace graduate school, and the growing body of work on participatory research it adds to exemplifies the value of localized knowledge combined with media messaging. There is a great deal of concern about “research that works,” so one of the analytic tools that was emphasized in the course is the cynefin model (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003). This systems model of management decision-making is a helpful diagnostic for those engaged in strategic communication and governance. It breaks situations or projects into five categories: simple, complicated, complex, chaotic and disordered. After individuals analyze their circumstances into one of these categories, the model helps determine the most appropriate response. In the first category there are best practices, in the second there are good practices that can be brought to bear, in the third there are emergent practices, in the fourth it is time to try a novel approach and in the fifth the disordered circumstances provide no guidelines. In the final instance strategic communication principles indicate that when all else fails, one should stop talking and just listen in order to build relationships (Taylor & Doerfel, 2003) and acquire communication capital that can effect change another day.

Notes

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3 That is not to say that the theory is without its challenges (see Conrad, 1993). Nonetheless, Giddens is largely considered one of the two or three most significant social theorists alive today.

4 This is a new use of this term. Nando Malmelin (2007) uses the notion of communication capital as organizational asset but we began using the term at about the same time as an individual development concept and prefer the use of communication capacity at the organizational or institutional level.

References


