

**Telenovelas, Culture and Social Change**  
**- from Polisemy, Pleasure and Resistance to Strategic Communication and  
Social Development**

by

**Thomas Tufte**, Ph.D  
UNESCO Chair of Communication (Feb-May 2003)  
Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona, Spain  
&  
Associate Professor  
University of Copenhagen, Denmark  
tufte@hum.ku.dk

# Telenovelas, Culture and Social Change

- from Polisemy, Pleasure and Resistance to Strategic Communication and Social Development

## Introduction: Telenovelas and Social Change

The fact that telenovelas often articulate not only emotional engagement but also social movement is well known (Fuenzalida 1997, Tufte 2000a/b). However, less known in Latin America today is the growing international trend of entertainment-education which has its roots in the Latin American tradition of telenovelas but which since has become a globalized strategy for both promoting particular behaviors, advocating rights of specific social groups and working to articulate social change (Singhal & Rogers 2002). It has become a working tool both in North American health communication and not least in many development projects in Africa and Asia, including in the gradually more intensified fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS (Tufte, In Press).

While a limited version of this *strategic* use of melodrama is known from the uses of social merchandising in telenovelas of for example Gloria Perez (*Explode Coracao* or *O Clone*), the vast majority of telenovelas produced in Brazil and Latin America today are not conceived in this strategic pro-social manner. They maintain a crucial and well-documented cultural and social role and function in the everyday lives of their audiences, but they have only occasionally been explored from the producers' perspective, as a deliberate and strategic tool to promote social and cultural change and promote specific development process (for example the Sabido/Televisa experience in Mexico which I will return to). Obviously, in the 1970ies and 1980ies, within the tradition of the critical media studies, telenovelas were often interpreted, by academics, as a tool of the hegemonic forces to impose a particular ideological line upon the audiences. However, today the situation is looked upon with more nuanced perspectives.

This article wishes to explore the role of telenovelas as an articulator of social and cultural change, and in particular wishes to bring the following question to the agenda: to which degree can the growing international experience of using telenovelas and similar formats strategically, for development purposes, serve similar purposes in Latin America? This experience has grown significantly in the past 10-15 years (Communication Theory 2002). It has come to be known as entertainment-education (E-E) which combines entertainment with education, with the deliberate purpose of articulating particular behaviours and increasingly also to stimulate social change processes (www.comminit.com). This article wishes to explore and discuss two issues: on one hand explore both the opportunities as well as limitations in capitalizing from the international E-E experience in order to further the strategic use of telenovelas in Latin American communication for social change. On the other hand, the article wishes to explore how the rich Latin American research on telenovelas can inform the field of strategic communication.

The article will fall in three parts. First, I will draw up key findings from previous Latin American telenovela-research regarding the actual socio-cultural role of telenovelas in the processes of development and modernization of Latin American societies. A synthesis of this originates in my own work on telenovelas, modernity and cultural change in Brazil (Tufte 2000a). Secondly, I will present the international experience with fiction-driven entertainment-education. This is an

experience which originated in Latin America, but which since has become a key element in a lot of health communication and development communication in general, seen both in Africa and Asia, but also in the US, Middle East and Europe. In recent years there is some evidence of E-E returning to Latin America as part of new strategies to pursue more profound social change-oriented objectives than was originally seen in the first E-E experiences in Mexico in the 1970ies. Part three of this article will therefore deal with this 'return to Latin America' of E-E and telenovelas discussing to which degree we possibly are standing at the verge of a paradigmatic change in how two traditionally opposed Latin American forms of communication - the mass media based telenovelas and the community based Freirean forms of interpersonal communication - today are being integrated into joint strategies that seek social change objectives.

## **1. Telenovelas, Modernity and Development in Latin America**

In Latin America the impact and role of telenovelas in society has been seen time and time again, articulating debate, social movement, leading to legal initiative and changes of laws, and thus having significant impact on development, being an integral player in the development of society. The bulk of recent research on the role of telenovelas in Latin America has focused on exploring forms and dynamics in the processes of identification and articulation of pleasure. Also, a growing number of reception studies has generated knowledge about the processes of production of meaning, illustrating the diversity and polisemy of media reception. Parallel to these issues being highlighted, Martin-Barbero's and Garcia Canclini's work have very early on inspired an emphasis on the cultural value of telenovela viewing and telenovela consumption in everyday life. However, it has been of more recent date that this cultural value has been more closely associated with the issues of human rights and cultural citizenship. In the following, all three issues mentioned above, are elaborated upon.

What remains yet to be explored much further is research into the strategic use of telenovelas in Latin America to articulate specific change processes. This practice, transcending the more narrowly defined experiences with social merchandising, remain somewhat limited. One of the practical experiences obtaining some attention, *Puntos de Encuentro* from Nicaragua, is mentioned later in this article.

### **Identification and Pleasure**

The research issues gaining the most attention in relation to telenovela viewing and consumption in Latin America is how telenovelas form part of everyday life and influence the formation and articulation of identity, and in the organisation of time, space and social relations (Covarrubias et al 1994, Fadul 1993, Gonzalez 1998, Jacks 1999, Kottak 1990, Leal 1986, Martin-Barbero & Munoz 1992, Maziotti 1993). My own case study exploring the uses of telenovelas in everyday life of low income urban women in Brazil is an example of this (Tufté 2000a). However, the most comprehensive case study to date is from 2002, and is gathered in the book by Maria Immacolata V. de Lopes et al: *Vivendo com a Telenovela*.

Looking at my case study, the women of the study, 13 low income urban women from three different towns in Brazil, had an average consumption of 3-4 telenovelas per day. In their lives, the telenovelas first and foremost lead to a high degree of emotional involvement: women being moved, touched, provoked and entertained. Although a love story is central to the narrative in most

telenovelas, it is the overall melodramatic character of the telenovelas that catches the viewer's attention. The telenovelas are based largely on an emotional relation with their audience enabling the articulation of a broad variety of feelings and identities.

In many of the cases, the process of identification also leads to a mingling of reality and fiction. That is, the telenovelas obtain a central place in the consciousness of the viewers, not only in the everyday life of prime time but throughout the day. All the women in the case study are aware of the fact that telenovelas are fiction, but the strong emotional involvement which the story evokes often gives the lives of telenovela characters a central place in the everyday life of the viewers, articulating feelings, stimulating conversation and thus influencing the production of meaning and the articulation and formation of identity.

It is important to emphasise the flow character by which the telenovelas form part of everyday life - with the viewing practices adapting to chores of everyday life, and with the actual telenovela often sounding more as a radio novela due to the very articulate sound effects. Often, they appear very radiophonic. Another detail, is for example the fact that some of the women spent more time 'listening' to telenovelas, being in the kitchen or doing other chores, not being physically in the room of the tv-set, except when the sound track indicated something important was about to happen. Going into more detail about the many forms of uses lies beyond the ability of this article.

In general terms, telenovelas are on one hand a source of entertainment, but the recognition and relevance that the audience accords to the narratives reveal the meaningful social, cultural and even political function that can be attributed to telenovelas. In many cases, television fiction proves more relevant and thus more meaningful than the evening news. The successful and deep-felt processes of identification lie at the core of this finding. In addressing issues of concern the telenovelas manage to articulate what Mary Ellen Brown has called active and re-active pleasure (Brown 1994: 173pp).

In the everyday use of telenovelas, ontological security is produced through a series of mechanisms relating to the recognition of plots, persons, issues and their relevance to the public's own concerns in everyday life. Normative debates are conducted firstly in the narratives and secondly in the discussions among the public, a process by which social norms are affirmed, adapted and revised. The 'true life' character of telenovelas validates the viewers' daily life, making them recognize themselves as actors in their daily story. Despite often portraying a material world far from the viewers' own lives, the telenovelas touch some everyday experiences which are highly recognizable for them, thereby setting in motion identification and feelings of satisfaction and pleasure, promoting a sense of social and cultural membership of a variety of different communities, counterbalancing the many processes of socio-cultural and political-economic marginalization experienced by many low-income citizens of Brazil. It becomes an important way of exercising cultural citizenship in the sense of finding a recognition of everyday concerns and to some degree experiencing that these concerns are shared by others.

However, it is important to stress that the celebration of reactive pleasure is not a socially and politically elevating activity *per se*. There are a variety of ways in which the experience of pleasure does lead to activity in society. As for example the Chilean media scholar Valerio Fuenzalida has emphasised in his work (1992, 1997), we all fundamentally relate emotionally to our television use, and obviously seek pleasure. Obtaining pleasure is involving, and can thus stimulate discussions and even social action, in addition to the pleasure of feeling represented on the screen. Arguments

for such perspectives on television fiction and its use are increasingly being advanced in empirical reception studies and in audience ethnography (Martin-Barbero 1993, Gillespie 1995).

### **Spaces of Identity: Producing Meaning in Hybrid Spheres of Signification**

A second issue dealt with in telenovela research is the form and nature of production of meaning. In my case study, the existence of a hybrid sphere of signification emerged as a socio-spatial phenomenon characteristic of the reception process amongst the women studied. This hybrid sphere was identified as an intermediary zone, being of both a material and symbolic nature and being constitutive for the processes of meaning making amongst the women I studied. This sphere of signification should thus be seen as a form of socio-cultural and socio-spatial organisation of everyday life, emphasising the processes of media use within it. It implied a special organisation of time and space, linked with a special code of conduct, which together created a sphere that was central in the formation of self, of identity, underpinned by emotion, and with the telenovelas as central agents. And it was neither fully public nor fully private. In material terms, it is the space constituted by the living room, but with its open doors and windows out to the often narrow streets of low income urban areas in Brazil, and as such becoming a grey-zone between the public and the private. Furthermore, most often the tv-set was situated so it could be watched from the outside, through doors and windows (Tufte 2000a).

Within this space, the large-scale consumption of telenovelas articulates feelings and identities, gives an incentive to dialogue within social networks, and in some instances promotes social action. Through the analysis of talk about telenovelas, my work on telenovelas provided insights into how these processes of emotional involvement, identification, dialogue and social action occur. It provided the empirical evidence as to the ways in which telenovelas influence the socio-psychic configuration of hybrid spheres of signification. Ultimately, and fundamentally, it provided insights into some of the 'raw material' constituting everyday life - feeling and relations which increasingly are linked to the mass media - and from which Latin American modernity is spun.

A significant part of the telenovelas' popularity lies in making the dream of rising in society come true: a dramatic narrative with social conflict, most often leading to social mobility for a principal character. Telenovelas thus reflect a central characteristic in Latin America in general - that of class polarisation and social conflict, in some cases stimulating social action among the viewers. Often, the talk about telenovelas articulates or results in social learning process; learning about family relations, gender characteristics, urban life, etc – thereby becoming a useful resource, enriching and often awareness raising and thought-provoking for the audience. The examples are many, from involvement in the passionate emotions of a love-drama, through admiration of female role models to the discussion of taboo issues occurring in everyday life. All these issues reflect what are significant concerns for many people, confirming the thesis that telenovelas are meaningful programmes, often more meaningful for the audience than news programmes dealing with issues far from the daily concerns of the audience.

These processes of production of meaning are at the same time what constitute the socio-psychic configuration of the hybrid sphere of signification. That is to say, the processes of emotional involvement, identification, dialogue and social action articulated through the use of telenovelas in everyday life constitute the socio-psychic 'material' which feeds into the configuration of time, space and social interaction of the hybrid sphere of signification and, in last instance, into the configuration of Latin American modernity.

## **Articulating Cultural Citizenship in a Mediated Public Sphere**

In the case of Brazil, telenovelas have increasingly – and especially from the mid-1980s and onwards – won a place in the process of re-democratisation and articulation of citizenship. In a time where the constitution of society is undergoing profound changes, new technology and mass communication is playing an increasingly important role. Everyday life in Brazil specifically, but also in general, is saturated by the media. This mediatization is increasingly challenging the traditional organisation of life in public and private spheres and resulting in reconceptualized notions of politics and power. In the case of Brazil, these conditions, linked with the popularity of the telenovelas, have favoured the telenovelas as an accessible mediated platform with a growing role in public debate and ultimately in the exercising of political power.

The situation thus leads towards a re-conceptualisation of how to think politics and citizenship. While the classical representative democracy was symbolized by the market place and by the public assemblies of Ancient Greece, democracy at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has developed within an information society and is characterized by passing through the public forum of the media. This forum, according to the English-American sociologist John B. Thompson, is a ‘non-localized, non-dialogical, open-ended space of the visible in which symbolic forms can be expressed and received by a plurality of non-present others’ (Thompson 1995: 245). A new public forum where the struggle for visibility in the media is becoming the core issue is challenging face-to-face communication as the central dynamic in politics and power struggles. Participation in the democratic debate in society becomes increasingly dependant on being visible in the media. The struggle for *mediated visibility* becomes a key concern for politicians, civil society and others participants in the political debate.

It is here – in the interconnection between the reconstitution of public and private sphere on one hand, and the re-conceptualisation of politics and power on the other – that the televised genre of telenovelas, in Latin America, enters as a central player in today’s main public forum: that of the media. Given the massive presence of nationally produced telenovelas in the everyday lives of the Latin American audiences, these nationally produced fiction programmes have an enormous potential for promoting public debates and articulating citizen identities. Viewers recognise in the telenovelas the themes of striving to belong and participate as members of different communities, whether national, local or relating to gender or profession, transforming their use of telenovelas into a process that promotes ‘belongingness’ or rather: citizenship.

Altogether, the social and cultural particularities of the telenovela characters and their relationships in the narrative are often very recognizable for the Brazilian public. They are a product of, and a referent to, a particular history, cultural and socio-economic situation that the whole public has in common. What my research showed was that these processes of recognition and identification which persons, problems and situations that viewers have in common contribute to and generate a common sense of belonging, often a sense of national belonging. By producing this sense of belonging the use of telenovelas is central in the construction of cultural citizenship among Brazilians.

## **E-E Beyond Social Merchandising**

What the presentation has demonstrated is that research on the Latin American telenovelas has focused on the deeper social and cultural role of telenovelas in everyday life, recognizing telenovelas as an important part of contemporary popular culture. As such, there is a rich and growing Latin American research tradition on telenovelas. However, one field where there is limited research is in exploring the role of telenovelas within strategic communication and within concerns about development and social change. There is basically no research systematically exploring cases where telenovelas have been used deliberately and strategically as part of campaigns and other efforts – be they governmental or non-governmental - to articulate social change. The most well known example is the work of Valerio Fuenzalida in Chile. Being a recognised researcher, but working in the past decade within the national public tv broadcasting TVN, Fuenzalida has had the opportunity to influence novelas and at the same time explore how they can influence development processes (Fuenzalida 1994 & 1997). In Brazil, there has been quite a significant number of telenovelas that deliberately have put social issues on the agenda in order to visibilize them (see LaPastini 1999 or Tufte 1999 & 2000b). Best known are the telenovelas by Gloria Perez (for example dealing with issues as street kids and the muslim world), but there are also examples of the celebration of ecology and sustainable development in *Pantanal* (Manchete 1990) or putting the issue of land reform on the agenda in *Rei do Gado* (Globo 1996/1997). However, most of these initiatives can at most be considered social merchandising, where social issues have been launched in single telenovelas, less part of major development strategies and more focused on raising awareness of specific issues. Consequently, less monitoring and evaluation has been seen of these initiatives than in the international experience with using E-E. However, this is not to say that the social merchandising in Latin American telenovelas has not contributed to social change. There are actually numerous examples of significant changes having been articulated by a telenovela. Despite a trajectory where telenovelas often have impacted on social change processes, there has been limited academic effort to track the nature and characteristics of these social change processes.

In the context of this article one of the ambitions is to take the well-established tradition of qualitative audience analysis on telenovelas in Latin America beyond the questions of active reception and articulation of pleasure, and promote a stronger emphasis on questions of cultural change, citizenship and the democratic functioning of the genre. Ideally, the aim is to build a link between the recognised and well-established insights of the force of fiction in a Latin American context with the international experiences of using strategic communication in development work. The aim is to link these international experiences to Latin America: making visible the experiences where strategies and tools have been developed to work more deliberately and focused with telenovelas as a means to promote and articulate social change processes. Thus, in the following I will make a brief retrospective of this international experience.

## **2. The Global Experience with Entertainment-Education**

The use of mass media and particularly television series and radio dramas to spread social messages is far from any new idea. One of the first modern examples is “The Archers”, a series produced by the BBC radio drama and broadcast in England in the early 1950s (it still runs!). It has communicated important information to the farmers in England, and in the mid 1950s it was listened to by two out of three adult Englishmen (Japhet, 1999).

Thus, it has long been part of overall strategies to use communication to prompt development, known as communication for development. However, it does remain an issue of controversy and debate how and to which degree media audiences are influenced by what they see. This is also at the core of the controversies between the different strategies within communication for development, and also within E-E itself.

Social marketing is one of the key origins of today's E-E strategies. The use of social marketing developed in the 1970s and was quickly tied up with fictional genres, and entertainment was particularly linked to mass media-based strategies, not least television and radio. One of the pioneers in the use of tv-fiction for pro-social behaviour change was Mexican Miguel Sabido. Between 1975 and 1985 Sabido produced a total of seven soap operas with built-in social messages. They were broadcast at Mexico's largest television network Televisa and were large audience successes (Singhal and Rogers 1999, Sherry 1998, Japhet 1999, Tufté 2000a). In countries such as India, Kenya, Tanzania and Brazil the use of television and radio and the explicit use of fictional genres gradually developed, all becoming building stones in the continuous development of E-E communication strategies.

Within the UN-system UNICEF in particular has worked strategically and in many places with a combination of social messages, social mobilisation and consciousness-raising. They have developed regional campaigns built up around comic-figures, Sara in Africa and Meena in Asia. They have also supported Soul City in their work. Undoubtedly, UNICEF is the strongest UN-agency in the field of health communication. Within UNESCO, WHO, UNAIDS and not least FAO, other E-E initiatives have been seen and supported. However, it is the field of health communication, which is the field that has carried E-E strategies the furthest. Here, HIV/AIDS is one of the new themes where E-E strategies are merging ([www.comminit.com](http://www.comminit.com)).

Within health communication two strong independent institutions in the US have played a central role. They are Population Communication International (PCI) and the Population Communication Services at John Hopkins University in Baltimore. Both are tightly linked to issues of reproductive health and family planning having developed numerous campaigns using social marketing in television and radio drama. They are both pioneers and some of the principal practitioners in E-E.

Today, E-E is growing as a field of practice in development, and with an increasing number of scholars debating the theoretical stands of it. The E-E conferences in Los Angeles in 1989, in Ohio in 1997 and most recently in Amsterdam in September 2000 have gathered key scholars and practitioners in debating the issue (Coleman and Meyer 1989). At the most recent conference, Soul



City, presented later in this article, was featured as one of the central cases to learn from, and served as a key input into discussions of the theoretical challenges in Entertainment-Education, campaign orchestration, media advocacy and strategic partnerships. Arvind Singhal and Everett Rogers, participants at all three E-E conferences and for many years key contributors to the theoretical and methodological development of E-E, have in their latest book defined Entertainment-Education in the following way: “Entertainment-Education is the process of purposively designing and implementing a media message both to entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members’ knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitudes, and change overt behavior” (Singhal and Rogers 1999: 9).

Singhal and Rogers thus see EE in continuation of the traditional three sequential stages of behaviour change: Knowledge, attitude and practice/behaviour. However, they do emphasize a social change perspective, where a longer-term final aim is made explicit. EE-programming has as its ultimate purpose, they argue, “to contribute to directed social change, defined as the process by which an alteration occurs in the structure and function of a social system” (Singhal and Rogers 1994 and 1999:9). EE-strategies, they argue, may contribute to social change either by effecting individual audience members or on group or system level, as agenda-setters or advocates, whereby the strategy transcends the individual and influences more broadly, on a societal level.

Martine Bouman (CEO of the last E-E 2000 event in Amsterdam and a renown theorist and practitioner of EE) has formulated a similar definition of EE: “Entertainment-education strategy is the process of purposively designing and implementing a mediating communication form with the potential of entertaining and educating people, in order to enhance and facilitate different stages of pro-social (behaviour) change” (Bouman 1999: 25).

The two definitions are very alike, however there is a slight conceptual difference. Singhal and Rogers base their understanding of EE on a functionalist approach - speaking of *creating* changes on the basis of a media exposure and *making alterations occur* on a system level. Bouman seems rather to understand the EE-communication strategy as a input into social and cultural processes where the output is difficult to predict the development of. She speaks of implementing a *mediating communication* with a *potential of enhancing and facilitating* stages of pro-social change. It is based on a more processual understanding of communication, and is more explicitly recognising the unpredictability of how mass communicated media texts may be understood and used by their audience.

What characterized the growing use of telenovelas in strategic communication, with the development of E-E strategies, were several issues. Firstly, ***a particular development of the genre*** was developed, where mass education via the media grew as a concern. Telenovelas, that traditionally had been conceived of as entertainment, were increasingly ascribed an educational potential, as a tool for both dissemination of information and thus for awareness raising. The first generation of this generic develop came to be known as ***social marketing***. As the concept literally mentions, this dealt with the marketing of social behaviors, most often health related behaviors – to

individuals watching the programmes. The focus was on using telenovelas for individual behaviour change objectives. This was the main appliance of E-E in the 1970ies, 1980ies and way up into the 1990ies. However, more recently, telenovelas have increasingly been used *as a tool for the purpose of articulating social change*. They have increasingly been integrated into multimethodological strategies combining several media, linked through partnerships to civil society and grassroots activities as well as to formal instruction. The South African organization, Soul City, is an example of this tendency, and will briefly be introduced in the following.

### **The Case of Soul City, South Africa**

The pioneers of the Soul City project are two medical doctors, Shereen Usdin and Garth Japhet. During the early 1990s, Garth Japhet, executive director of Soul City, worked in clinics among poor groups in the city as well as in the countryside: “In the early 1990s I worked both in the rural areas of Zulu land and in the townships of Soweto and Alexandra in Johannesburg. Here I realised that I despite my training as a doctor had no real influence on the basic problems” (Japhet 1999). Japhet and his colleague Shereen Usdin realised the need for health training on completely basic issues such as childcare, contraception and AIDS. The overall objective, according to Japhet, was to develop an on-going vehicle that could promote social change, thus being not issue based but vehicle based. Seen in retrospective, the media were from the outset considered the vehicle whereby information had and continued to be made accessible, real and appropriate to the audience. Through formative research the audience from the outset played a crucial role in the overall message development process and were ultimately the agents of change, deciding themselves how and if to use the information provided. As such, Soul City developed an inclusive vehicle where the core agents of change were the audiences, although the unit of change transcended the individual viewers, listeners and readers, being the broad society .

While writing a weekly column for one of the largest newspapers in South Africa, The Sowetan, Japhet quickly realised the need to use other media in order to reach the target groups: all the people that could not read nor write. At this point TV and radio entered the picture. Despite resistance from scriptwriters and directors Garth Japhet, and with him Shereen Usdin, stood their ground and developed the idea behind Soul City I; the first 13 TV episodes with supplementing educational material. The creative people were not used to having doctors interfering in their work. In South Africa no prior experiences existed to learn from, making it an insecure process for everyone involved.

The focus of the series was mothers' and children's health conditions, and it was televised and broadcast on radio in the middle of 1994. However, as Japhet says: “A lot of people, especially donors, thought we were crazy. They had never heard of anything like this before” (Japhet 1999).

The series was a huge hit among the South African public. The concept behind was to supplement the television series with newspaper columns, followed by radio series and, later on, by educational material treating the same issues. All of it was to be based upon the story of the citizens of the fictional township Soul City.

The very first series, Soul City I, has since been exported to a large number of African countries, among others, Zambia, Mozambique, Namibia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and the Ivory Coast,. Today Soul City receives grants from the EU, the British DFID (Department for International Development), The Open Society, UNICEF and the South African Government. In addition to this a number of privately owned companies also contribute financially to the Soul City project, among others, BP and Old Mutual. Series II was introduced in 1995, series III in 1997, series IV in 1999 and Soul City V in 2001. In 2000 Soul City launched a new initiative, Soul Buddyz (Buddies) I, aimed at 8-12 year olds. It comprises of a tv-series in 26 episodes followed by radio serials in three different languages, with life skills material for schools and a parenting book to assist caregivers.

### **A Cyclical Communication Strategy**

The guiding principle for Soul City is *edutainment*, their denomination of entertainment-education. Garth Japhet has developed a model that explains the main principles of the “Edutainment Vehicle” (Japhet 1999). Japhet’s argues for a *cyclical communication strategy*, where a number of inputs are fed into the media vehicle, which then results in a number of outputs. The overall process and the outputs in particular are then evaluated which then serves as a key input into the next fase of the on-going vehicle.

As for inputs, there are two key inputs: 1) *the audience and expert centered research process*, the formative research, and 2) *the partnerships* established with civil society, government, private sector, international partners and others. In a very participatory process, messages are developed and worked into the creative products, the media narratives, being both tv, radio and print. Soul City emphasizes that the model is generic, and that any narrative form can be applied in the media vehicle. It could also be popular theatre, music or any other form of popular cultural narrative. Soul City has had the opportunity to work in prime time and with the mass media and believe firmly in the efficiency of this. However, the medium may well be another if this opportunity is not possible. The media vehicle results in two key types of output: 1) *the direct output*, being the changes in knowledge, attitude, social norms and intermediate and direct practices (the traditional KAP-distinction can be nuanced substantially, which Soul City also emphasizes) as well as the development of a supportive environment favoring these mentioned changes. 2) *the development of potential opportunities*. These potential opportunities, made possible due to the media intervention, contain a number of interesting opportunities, some of which Soul City have come far in making use of, while others still are being developed further. These include educational packages, advocacy at both community and national level, and the development and use of their brand name.

Soul City has been active since 1994 and has constantly and closely evaluated the outcomes of the ongoing communication interventions. It lies beyond this article to unfold the findings, except

stating that the Soul City E-E vehicle has obtained changes and results both as individual behaviour change as well as influencing more profound social change processes (see also Tufte 2001).

The heavy emphasis Soul City puts on monitoring and evaluating their communication strategy has contributed to making them an international show case which has inspired many other E-E focused communication strategies world-wide. Thus also in Latin America. They have inspired similar E-E based strategies in Suriname, have been negotiating and inspiring Peruvian and Colombian initiatives and their successful use of fiction for change has generally gained a lot of visibility in the debates amongst theorists and practitioners involved in communication for development and social change. Nevertheless, despite this intercontinental cooperation and inspiration, the most successful case of using tv fiction for social change purposes in Latin America is actually a very recent genuine 'home-grown' case from Nicaragua. It is the case of the NGO 'Puntos de Encuentro' who has succeeded not only in producing the first Nicaraguan telenovela, called *El Sexto Sentido* (36 episodes, transmitted in 2001) but in putting a broad range of social issues on the agenda for large youth populations in Nicaragua. Thus, the most innovative pro-social use of telenovelas in Latin America is currently growing in a small country with no tradition for domestic production of telenovelas. And 'El Sexto Sentido' was a tremendous success – the most popular tv programme for the youth audience at all (Rodrigues, forthcoming). The second round of *El Sexto Sentido* is on air in 2003/2004.

### **3. Conclusion: The New Momentum**

What we have outlined in this article has been the two parallel tendencies in the relation between telenovelas and social change. Firstly we find what I believe is well-known to most of the readers here: the research of Martin-Barbero from the mid 1980ies and onwards, the increasing recognition of popular culture and the role of telenovelas as part of this, and the growing application of the theory of mediations to analyse the role of telenovelas in peoples lives. A Latin America cultural studies tradition has grown around the study of a genre and has expanded out from there.

However, what has been developing parallel, but still originating in a fascination about telenovelas and a recognition of their socio-cultural force are the (often) donor-driven communication interventions that have grown out of the Sabido-experience in Mexico, and thus grown from the early days of telenovelas in Latin America. The research that emerged in this field in the 1970ies and 1980ies was initially very focusing on individual behaviour change, rooted in linear communication models and based on traditions of persuasion and psychological modelling. However, this had changed radically and in more recent years, inspired by innovative cases as that of Soul City in South Africa.

Thus, there seems today to be, on one hand, a rich understanding of telenovelas in the Latin American research tradition and on the other hand a rich practical experience with producing and using telenovelas strategically in international development work. The challenge that emerges here is how to apply the insights and the theoretical-methodological advancements of the mainstream telenovela research on the field of E-E? While strategic communication as an international field of communication practice is in dramatic need of such theoretical-methodological advancements, enrichments and further developments, the other need is also apparent: to try increasingly to explore how telenovelas may contribute even further in addressing the development problems in Latin

America. The international field of strategic communication for social change may well have some experience worth studying in this respect.

Thus, to summarise, a range of key questions have emerged that all demand further attention:

1. With the existing wealth of research that understands the qualities and roles of the telenovela genre in everyday life, what are the actual possibilities and limitations of using this genre more strategically as a mediator of social change?
2. Could we imagine a stronger strategic use of telenovelas – and radionovelas - in the Latin America societies, linked with partnerships in civil society and in the educational system?
3. To which degree can commercial tv as Rede Globo or Televisa serve the public interest of social development without sacrificing commercial objectives?
4. There is still a strong need for a stronger theoretical-methodological framework to understand the use and impact of tv-fiction in communication for development and social change. Given this need, how can we promote a closer cooperation between Iberoamerican telenovela researchers and the international field of E-E practitioners and scholars, in particular with south-south co-operation? Could this result in a more pro-active involvement of Iberoamerican telenovela researchers into the field of development and social change?

## **Bibliography**

Bouman, Martine (1999). Collaboration for Pro-social Change: The Turtle and the Peacock. The Entertainment-Education Strategy on Television. Netherlands: Thesis Wageningen Agricultural University.

Brown, M. E. (1994). Soap Operas and Women's Talk. The Pleasure of Resistance. London: Sage.

Coleman, P.L. and R.C.Meyer (1989). "Entertainment for Social Change": Proceedings from the first enter-educate conference, March 29-April 1, 1989. Center for Communication Programs Johns Hopkins University, the Annenberg School for Communication. University of Southern California, Center for Population Options.

Communication Theory. 12: 2, May 2002. Special Issue on Entertainment-Education. Oxford University Press.

Covarrubias, K., A. Bautista & Bertha A. Uribe (1994). Cuéntame en Qué se Quedó. La Telenovela como fenómeno social. Mexico: Trillas/Felafacs.

Fadul, A. M. (Ed.). (1993). Serial Fiction in Tv. The Latin American Telenovelas. Sao Paulo: USP.

Fuenzalida, V. (1994). La apropiacion educativa de la telenovela. Santiago: CPU.

Fuenzalida, V. (1997). Television y Cultura Cotidiana. La influencia social de la TV percibida desde la cultura cotidiana de la audiencia. Santiago: CPU.

Gillespie, M. (1995). Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change. London: Routledge.

Gonzalez, J. (Ed.). (1998). La cofradía de las emociones (in)terminables. Miradas sobre telenovelas en Mexico. Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara.

Jacks, N. (1999). Querencia. Cultura, Identidade e Mediação. Porto Alegre: Editora da Universidade.

Japhet, Garth (1999). Edutainment. How to make Edutainment work for you: a step by step guide to designing and managing an edutainment project for social development. Johannesburg: Soul City.

Kottak, C.P. (1990). Prime-Time Society. An Anthropological Analysis of Television and Culture. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

La Pastina, A. (1999). Ph.D Thesis. University of Austin, Texas.

Leal, O.F. (1986). O Leitura Social da Novela das Oito. Rio de Janeiro: Vozes.

Lopes M. I .V. de, Silvia Borelli and Vera da Rocha Resende. 2003. Vivendo com a telenovela – mediações, recepção, teleficcionalidade. Sao Paulo: Summus Editorial.

Martin-Barbero, J (1993). Communication, Culture and Hegemony. From Media to Mediations. London: Sage.

Martin-Barbero, J. & Munoz, S. (1992). Televisión y Melodrama. Colombia: Tercer Mundo Editores.

Maziotti, N. (1993). El espectáculo de la pasión: Las telenovelas latinoamericanas. Buenos Aires: Colihue.

Rodrigues, Clemencia (Forthcoming). Puntos de Encuentro – Communicating for Social Change. In: Oscar Hemer and Thomas Tuftte (Eds): Communication for Social Change – towards a new communication paradigm. University of Malmö, Sweden.

Sherry, John L (1997) Pro-Social Soap Operas for Development: A Review of Research and Theory. In: Communication and Development: Beyond Panaces. The Journal of International Communication, Special Issue. 4:2 December 1997; pp. 75-102.

Singhal, A. & Rogers, E. (2002). A Theoretical Agenda for Entertainment-Education. Communication Theory, 12:2, 117-135.

Singhal, A. & Rogers, E. (1999). Entertainment-Education. A Communication Strategy for Social Change. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Thompson, John. B (1995). The Media and Modernity. A Social Theory of the Media. Polity Press:

Cambridge.

Tufte, Thomas (1999). Television Fiction, National Identity and Democracy - the role of national television fiction in modern societies. In: Duroseu, Isabell. ed. Reception de la télévision. University of Copenhagen: Copenhagen.

Tufte, Thomas (2000a). Living with the Rubbish Queen. Telenovelas, Culture and Modernity in Brazil. Luton: University of Luton Press.

Tufte, Thomas (2000b). The Popular Forms of Hope: About the Force of Fiction Among Tv Audiences in Brazil. In: Hagen, I and J. Wasko. 2000 (Eds). Consuming Audiences? Production and Reception in Media Research. IAMCR/Hampton Press: New Jersey.

Tufte, T. (2001). Entertainment-Education and Participation - Assessing the Communication Strategy of Soul City. In: Journal of International Communication. IAMCR/Macquarie University: Sydney: Vol 7:2, 2001. 25-51.

Tufte, T. (In Press). Soap Operas and Sense-Making: Mediations and Audience Ethnography In: M.Cody, A.Singhal, M.Sabido & E.Rogers (eds). Entertainment-Education Worldwide: History, Research and Practice. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

[www.comminit.com/roundtable2/indez.html](http://www.comminit.com/roundtable2/indez.html). Declaration: International Communication for Development Roundtable. Managua, November 2001.