

Media Development

2/2023

WACC

Archival Justice: Unfinished Business



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- 4 Editorial
- 5 Archiving 'Unwritten' Stories:
Enabling Efforts Towards
Archival Justice in the Caribbean
Stanley H. Griffin
- 9 Caribbean French Creole
languages, historical and
contemporary prejudices
Embert Charles
- 14 Making records and information
management culturally relevant
in the Caribbean
Sparkle N. Ferreira
- 18 Whose memory and why: A
commentary on power and the
construction of memory
Sandra Obradović
- 24 Communication for all in
the digital age: An African
perspective
Charles Okigbo
- 29 On the screen

Recent issues of *Media Development*

- 1/2023 Utopia or Bust: In Search of Inclusion
- 4/2022 Statements on Communication for a Better Future
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- 2/2022 Celebrating Canada's Indigenous Media
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IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The 3/2023 issue of *Media Development* will ask Who listens to the audience? Understanding audience engagement and media literacy efforts today.



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A pebble on a beach is an archive of geological stories that “are gigantic, and reach realms well beyond human experience, even beyond human imagination. They extend back to the Earth’s formation – and then yet farther back, to the births and deaths of ancient stars.”¹

The Earth itself is a repository that geologists, paleontologists, anthropologists, and sociologists ceaselessly study and categorize in search of connections to elucidate a 4.6 billion-year-old history. And when it comes to human beings, we late-arrivals on the scene continually create archives that record the passing of empires and generations, leaving footprints on the sands of memory. Or, as French sociologist Pierre Nora once described it, “shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded.”²

In theory, everyone’s story matters. Yet, history shows that power politics dictate what endures and whose stories are remembered. Consequently, as this issue of *Media Development* seeks to demonstrate, it is a matter of “archival justice” whose images and voices are recorded for posterity.

As is all too apparent, what is archived or retained in political, economic, and social structures – including language – tends to embody inclusions and exclusions, discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, one set of rules for the elite and another for the rest.

In the words of one expert commentator, “There should be a space for alternative realities, alternative ways of knowing, in the archive. There should be room for imagining a world in which justice not injustice triumphed.”³

Wittingly or unwittingly, archives reinforce social and economic inequalities. By so doing, they mirror the societies in which they were put together and, by their very nature, select, judge, and exclude. In this way and over time, they strengthen the dominance of the establishment, providing a powerful tool to frame and justify myths and policies.

Archives are an often overlooked dimen-

sion of current struggles against the legacies of colonialism and racism. Re-imagining archives becomes an intrinsic dimension of the right to memory and a matter of justice:

“In all communities and societies, the choice of what is recorded in the public memory and the way it is represented is not neutral but happens in accord with predetermined perceptions and policies. This politics of remembering or forgetting constitutes a struggle for power.”⁴

The mass media are a kind of public archive. What newspapers, television programmes, and films choose to cover constitutes a record of contemporary life viewed through many different lenses and subject to norms and practices that inevitably change over time. And, however transient, social media are a contemporary form of archive, largely unregulated and subject to inaccuracies, distortions, misinterpretation, and disinformation.

Archival justice is a claim, therefore, for fair and balanced representation in the public collections of information and data that frame society’s interactions with itself. The multiplicity of archives makes the task of regulating them extremely difficult. Yet there are general principles to do with human dignity, impartiality, equity, and truth that ought to apply regardless.

As one commentator on the politics of injustice notes, “We must confront history’s unfinished business... the preservation of the memories of slavery and emancipation is important for the knowledge and wisdom to be gained from such memories.”⁵ After all, everyone has a story to tell. ■

Notes

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Archiving 'unwritten' stories: Enabling efforts towards archival justice in the Caribbean

Stanley H. Griffin

*"I am living while I am living to the
Father I will pray*

*Only him know how we get through
every day,*

With all the hike in the price

Arm and leg we haffi pay

While our leaders play...

*I could go on and on, the full has never
been told."*

Mark "Buju Banton" Myrie, *Untold Stories* 1995

Jamaican lyricist and dancehall legend, Buju Banton in his popular song *Untold Stories* describes the daily struggles of the working masses of Jamaica, and the Caribbean. Through his reggae dancehall lyrics, Banton captures the arduous realities of everyday lived experiences as well as the general perspectives of the working classes that are not formally documented in customary writings found in Caribbean archives.

The Caribbean still suffers from the colonial hierarchical dynamics and politics that shaped its societies. From the arrival of Europeans, conquest of the territories inhabited by the various Indigenous communities, to the importation of European indentured servants, African enslaved

labourers and later Asian and Indian indentured workers, the Caribbean developed from plantations into multicultural nations, whose various cultures were oppressed by colonialism.

This enforced Eurocentric homogeneity not only expressed itself in language usage or architectural design, but also in information forms and record-keeping practices. Of the many present-day injustices that colonialism engendered, the injustices that were written still often overshadow the injustice of "the written", i.e. an injustice created by the writer on the written.

While the written word is appraised, held as "reliable and truth" and then placed in the Archive for preservation, it simultaneously negates the value of the spoken word, i.e. oral traditions – with its songs, stories, movements, etcetera, and suggests these expressions lack reliability and truth, and therefore should not be seen as archival. These expressions and forms of documentation are perceived as cultural activities, integral to the rituals of living and community formation, but are not openly appreciated as archival forms. These unwritten stories cannot be accessed in archives that were designed and resourced for preserving paper-based written memories.

Archives in the Commonwealth Caribbean do not necessarily reflect the totality of social, economic, and political narratives that inform the popular or national discourse. There is some disconnect between popular memory and the evidences of the histories championed by those in authority. Victoria Borg O'Flaherty, former national archivist in St Kitts and Nevis, describes this very real national memory dilemma.

"Many natives of St Kitts have claimed that they do not care about the past because there is nothing in it that is worth remembering. The complexities of the relationship of post-colonial societies and their history have often had an impact on the way archives are viewed. Kittitian researchers approach them with a sense of awe, that something so old has survived while others call them 'white people archives' and refuse to use them. By recognizing that the

archive was an inherent part of the machinery of colonialism, one becomes conscious of its limitations in contributing to the history of the colonized in a post-colonial community and yet it is still a source of information about them.”¹

Thus, there is an “archival injustice” which is based on the exclusion of the information details and memory practices and which privileges Eurocentric forms of record-keeping and information details. This legacy of information forms dictates what can be found in the holdings of Caribbean Archives and what is generally remembered by populations, thereby further perpetuating the social injustices of the day that shaped the records and subjugated the recorded, i.e. archival injustice.

Defining archival justice

One may ask, is it possible to define and achieve “archival justice”? One could envision archival justice as the positive result of “archival decolonization”, which is defined as:

“[The] reconsideration of the contexts, perspectives, subjects, and mechanisms of the record, which has to be redefined to include non-traditional information materials. This requires a reinterpretation and re-evaluation of historical circumstances, cultural realities, and information sources. The results of decolonization should be deliberate action to include the details, memory, practices, records, recordkeeping principles and subjects of the formerly excluded by colonial archival thought and praxis.”²

In other words, if Caribbean societies, and its memory institutions, recognize and validate non-traditional information materials as indeed archival, then there will be equitable representation within the “houses of memory” for all in the society. Hazel V. Carby offers an intriguing description – if not an ambition – of archival injustice:

“There should be space for alternative realities, alternative ways of knowing, in the archive. There should be room for imagining a world in which justice not injustice triumphed, a world where wealth had been returned to those who had produced it... no one should look to the colonial archives for social justice.”³

Decolonized Archives create spaces for other forms of documentation, and for culturally appropriate ways of accessing those forms of memory, which in turn, gives rise to archival justice. Thankfully, there is a growing recognition and appreciation for these alternate forms of knowledge, ways of documenting and expressions of memory that are being included within the holdings of Caribbean archives.

Efforts towards archival justice

Within the Caribbean, there is a growing recognition of the informational values of the internationally renowned cultural expressions and practices. Oral tradition, in the Caribbean, is the key source for accessing, interpreting, and retelling the details and perceptions of the masses and not solely the traditional archive. Additionally, each community has its own unique histories, narratives, and personalities, which are expressed within local cultural contexts and are based on particular historical experiences. The social resistance that took place daily in the plantations and occasionally in rebellions between colonial masters and African enslaved labourers also occurred in the forms of information creation and documentation.

“While the colonial establishment wrote their reports, diary journals and jotted observations as notes, the marginalized masses sang songs and chants, danced, told stories and held community gatherings. The creativity of the gifted singer, musician, dancer, storyteller, and community leader is central to the creation, dissemination and preservation of information, as is the scribe with ink and paper.”⁴

There are deliberate efforts to collect materials from the community, such as family and personal papers, audiovisual recordings and photographs. Some institutions have either conducted or supported local oral history projects, while others have created initiatives at enabling interest in community memory. Undoubtedly, these efforts result in other formats of materials being donated/deposited at the Archives. Regional archives are steadily increasing and diversifying their capacities in order to preserve non-paper materials.

Another effort Caribbean memory institutions use to promote archival justice in the Caribbean is by participating in community education and memory-recovery training on-going initiatives. In one territory, the archivist used the holdings of their archives to create a local history course that was offered at the nearby university. This became an opportunity to introduce aspects of the island's history, while capturing community narratives which offer complementary details to those reflected in official records.

In another island, archival staff participate in community heritage research and renovation/re-enactment projects. By conducting training sessions on how to research official records, document and record oral histories, archives empower community members to actively engage in preserving memory from their perspectives. In another instance, archivists use outreach initiatives, such as open days, exhibitions and social and traditional media programmes to encourage donation of materials and engagement with archival holdings. By using websites and social media platforms, memory institutions are making their holdings relevant to their communities while encouraging their target audiences to find greater value in their materials. However, there is one more effort that is enabling access to other forms of archival memory.

Using the internet as community archive

The internet, especially social media platforms, have grown increasingly popular among community enthusiasts and grassroots movements for

creating and sharing informational details, community records and objects and stories. Groups such as “You know you are Antiguan if...” create and give participating audiences the space to share personal photographs, video-recordings, and recollections about community details that may be based on particular times and places and may not have survived to present-day.

The international lockdowns that formed part of the response to the 2020 Corona virus (Covid-19) pandemic created opportunities for

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greater use of web-based video conferencing and social media platforms for activities and events that were traditionally held in community-oriented festivals and designated spaces. These events, coupled with the creativity of artistes, designers and performers, provided spaces for persons to use traditional cultural expressions in new digital ways.

Calypsos, for example, found new audiences and articulations, such as Tik Tok dance and singing challenges, while creating songs and lyrics which detail and document pandemic experiences. Finally, these digital expressions are saved and made accessible on online video sharing platforms, such as YouTube. These YouTube videos create other opportunities for global access to contemporary community and cultural expression, practice and thought, which are not always found in memory institutions.

Conclusion

Archival justice initiatives are as empowering and impactful as social justice movements. These efforts push for recovering and supporting the revitalization of information forms and cultural practices. These efforts affirm the “alternative ways of knowledge” that are produced by communities that were marginalized by colonialism. Caribbean archives have undoubtedly ostracized its masses with holdings that were created by, and used for, colonialism. These efforts at attaining archival justice recognize the autonomy of communities to document, keep, preserve, share their own stories. Communities can be confident custodians of their heritage and nurture their own traditions.

In so doing, communities can provide evidence of their narratives and experiences in ways that are unique to their contexts and cultures. By creating their own recordkeeping spaces, communities can support memory institutions by complementing traditional holdings with their cultural records. Finally, archival justice promotes the human rights of all persons within a society, by respecting the community’s information-modes of creation, preservation and sharing,

while offering access to the community’s particular social contributions and voice in the society.

Records and archives should include and represent all within a society. All should have their voices documented and preserved. All should inform the patrimony of the nation. The efforts towards attaining archival justice in the Caribbean are still a work in progress. As long as there are “untold stories”, the work will go on and on. ■

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Caribbean French Creole languages, historical and contemporary prejudices

Embert Charles

The observance of international mother language day during the month of February every year by the United Nations (UN) organization, since 1999, was intended to promote awareness of the estimated 6,000 to 7,000 languages that exist in our world. More importantly, people around the world in nations and organizations are encouraged to implement programmes to protect those languages. These efforts, however, have been thwarted among other factors by the increasing efforts of the developed north to continue expansionist policies to facilitate trade and economic growth. Inherent in the process of globalization is the dominant use of a few European and Asian official languages.

UNESCO estimates that 43% of the 6,000 to 7,000 languages are endangered.¹ But the efforts of the United Nations (UN) and UNESCO, and financial support from private donors, pale in comparison to the factors which facilitate destruction of the indigenous languages. Since 1996, for instance, one of the many NGOs supporting language preservations, the Endangered Language Fund, has provided support for 221 languages under threat.² On the other hand, the policies of discrimination against the use of indigenous languages are practiced in the coun-

tries of the global North and South.

In some countries, these mother tongues are used by small sections of the populations. In other countries, they are used extensively and have de facto become *nation* languages, the language which forms a critical component of national and cultural identity.

Among the languages that are under threat and endangered are the French creole languages and in particular the Antillean Creoles of the Caribbean region. These languages are critical for communications, governance, cultural preservation and development. While they remain in the mainstream of popular usage, they have not in many cases been officially recognized and protected by legislation. This situation constitutes a grave danger to their survival.

The UN has called on all the countries in the world to protect multilingualism and multiculturalism and to implement programmes to safeguard the languages. Sadly, these calls have not been matched by investment and financial support for language research and preservation programmes.

The creoles in the Caribbean are under constant threat notwithstanding their popularity. St. Lucian Creole (Kwéyòl) is a variety of Caribbean French lexicon Creole and spoken by the majority of the population. It is mutually intelligible with other Antillean creoles spoken in Martinique, Guadeloupe, Commonwealth of Dominica, and Haiti.³ Similarly, virtually every Haitian speaks Creole (Kreyol). Michael De Graff notes, "The systematic use of Kreyol at all levels of education, administration, justice, etc., is therefore indispensable for ensuring equality of opportunity and non-discrimination among Haitians."⁴

Narratives of discrimination

The protection of mother languages particularly those that are endangered, can be considered to be a battle for financial resources, for policy positioning, and for the minds of citizens many of whom are rapidly being made to believe that they possess active competence in the language of the



former colonial powers.

There are many factors both contemporary and historical that continue to militate against development and survival of the mother tongues in the Caribbean. One factor is that the use of indigenous languages continues to be associated with the era of enslavement, underdevelopment, and backwardness of the societies.

Discrimination against use of indigenous languages continues in many domains in the creole speaking countries. Educators and cultural workers in Saint Lucia and Haiti, for instance, have noted that discrimination exists in households, the formal schools, the churches, the business sectors and government agencies. Notwithstanding the extensive development of writing systems and orthographies for indigenous languages, some argue that the Antillean Creoles are not languages. This situation contributes to an identity crisis for individuals, particularly youth who are eager to embrace their language and culture, traditions, and folklore in this era of increasing globalization.

These prejudices are clearly articulated in the historical accounts of the Saint Lucia society. Henry Breen, writing in 1844, described the creole language in this way:

“It is, in short, the French language, stripped of

An excerpt from an early newspaper publication *Balata*, which was published by the Folk Research Centre and distributed in Saint Lucia, Commonwealth of Dominica, Martinique, and Guadeloupe.

its manly dignified ornaments, and travestied for the accommodation of children and toothless old women ... although possessing an extensive knowledge of the French Language, acquired during sojourn of five years in France, I have failed in obtaining anything like an adequate notion of this gibberish, during a residence of nearly fifteen years in St. Lucia and Martinique” (Breen, 1844).

Over the past four decades, some of the experts on the Kwéyòl have also cited cases where the prejudices against the language are clearly articulated. The list includes historian and educator Morgan Dalphinis, priest and cultural worker Patrick Anthony, and author/educator Simmonds Mac Donald.

Hazel Simmonds Mac Donald, one of the Saint Lucia’s leading proponents of Kwéyòl use in schools acknowledged that the use of the language in the public domain such as radio programmes, during the presentation of the throne speech by the Governor General, and in public cultural events such as Jounen Kwéyòl (international Creole Day) are commendable. She laments however that:

“Our institutions have not allowed Kwéyòl to be as powerful a voice in the shaping of Saint Lucian cultural imagination as it can be, or its expression in media other than the oral traditions that are not preserved in the collective memory of fewer St. Lucians” (Charles and Lee, 2017).

In a study published in 2021, Caribbean linguist Sandra Evans⁵ studied the use of the language in the justice system and concluded that translations of witness evidence by the police from Kwéyòl speakers were so varied that

they could have negative consequences for the dispensation of justice.

Counter narratives and advocacy

In the Caribbean region, however, there have been over the past decades many counter narratives, arguments and initiatives that promote indigenous and nation languages and mother tongues.

The Msgr. Patrick Anthony Folk Research Centre (FRC) in Saint Lucia is a unique organization that has been at the forefront of programming and advocacy on Kwéyòl. The FRC implements programmes on the teaching of the language and has facilitated the publication of books in Kwéyòl including a dictionary and a compendium of songs and biblical readings. The FRC has continued to engage the government in discussions, supported by studies, to enact legislation to make Kwéyòl an official language. Some significant milestones have been achieved in the five decades of work. Leading among these is the use of Kwéyòl in the parliament and the extensive use of Kwéyòl by the creative community particularly poets and calypsonians.

Some of these milestones for Kwéyòl advancement in Saint Lucia in the past two decades have contributed to the counter narrative against discrimination. Dame Pearlette Louisy, a founding member of the global Creole language movement and former Governor General of Saint Lucia, lists some of them as the publication of the New Testament in Kwéyòl; the approval by the Saint Lucia government of a Kwéyòl version of the national anthem for use at public events; the publication by a leading national bank of its annual report in Kwéyòl.⁶

The advocacy for redress, respect and representation of Caribbean creole languages assumed global proportions in 1983 with the formation of the international grouping of Creole speaking countries. The organization – Bannzil Kreyol (Group of creole speaking islands of the Caribbean and Pacific region) – was established to promote the use of the Creoles in all domains in the respective member countries. Two Bann-

zil countries, Seychelles and Haiti, have enacted legislation that formalized their Creole language as an official language.

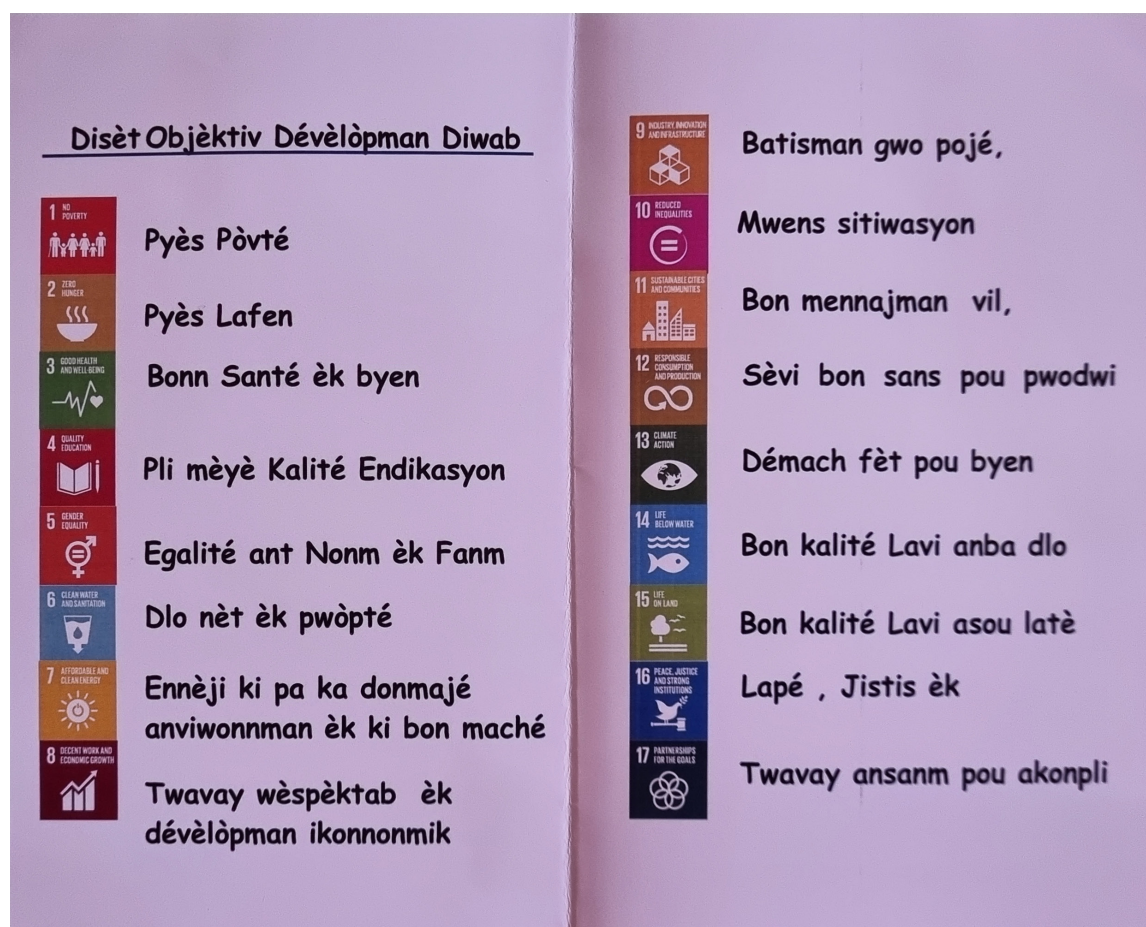
Initiatives in the Caribbean region include programmes at the University of the West Indies and Université des Antilles on the research and teaching of indigenous creoles and nation languages.

At the intergovernmental level, the establishment of World Mother Language Day and the declaration of the International Decade of Indigenous languages by UNESCO expands the new narrative of acceptance and importance to the level of governments.

Perhaps the most significant innovative new programme by an NGO for redress, respect, and representation of indigenous languages has been the programmes of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) on communications rights. The approach by WACC is to elevate indigenous language use within the broader context of the human right to communicate in his or her native language. According to WACC:

“Communication rights are premised not only on ‘holding opinions’ and ‘seeking receiving and imparting information’, all of which are rights of a single individual or entity, but also on communicating, that is on the completion of an interaction between people. They seek to bring about a cycle that includes not only seeking, receiving and imparting, but also listening and being heard, understanding, learning, creating and responding.”⁷

In 2020, WACC extended its advocacy on communications rights with the publication of a book that proposed the inclusion of communications rights as the eighteenth goal in the list of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The new SDG goal 18 Communication for All would be: *To expand and strengthen public civic spaces through equitable and affordable access to communication technologies and platforms, media pluralism, and media diversity.*⁸



Excerpt from a booklet on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Kwéyòl.

“In too many Haitian classrooms, students are still punished, humiliated and even expelled for speaking Kreyol at school. The practice of punishing children due to using their mother tongue interferes with their skill, creativity and well-being.”⁹

Above all however it is the continuing intransigence of governments and the relevant national institutions on the issue of formalization and legislation to protect this language which remains one of the greatest setbacks. The absence of the formal recognition of Kwéyòl in Saint Lucia as an official language is a significant drawback to the implementation of national programmes for development and promotion.

Collaboration for redress

In many cases around the world, the negative attitudes and practices of discrimination against indigenous languages resulted in minimal recording and archiving. Some early archivers, as in the cases of the Caribbean, painted their accounts with colonial tones. Their historiographies were inadequate and did not truly reflect the richness and significance of the language. Some of the early academic researchers did not have the tools to address the descriptions and perceptions of non-scientific and non-systematic qualities of the mother languages in the Caribbean region.

In order to address these issues and facilitate research, information exchange and archiving, Louisy¹⁰ stated that for the Antillean Creole, the foundational developmental work on the writing system were based on the following guiding principles, which have been applied from 1983:

Ongoing contradictions and dilemmas

In their efforts to implement programmes for the preservation of their mother languages, indigenous communities and non-governmental organizations continue to face new challenges. While many new sources of financial support have emerged, the conditions imposed on accessing funds are onerous and in some case beyond the capacities of these organizations.

Within some areas in the commercial and business sector, a narrative continues to be articulated about the relevance of mother languages in the world of business today. This is perpetuated through the propagation of fake news and biased opinions in the many echo chambers of social media.

While Mother Language Day is being observed by the United Nations and in particular UNESCO every year, the programmes have not captured the imagination of many publics.

Over the past decade the governments of the Commonwealth of Dominica and Saint Lucia have announced plans to introduce the teaching of creole language in schools, but the programmes either have not been launched, or they have been introduced in isolated cases. De Graff states that in the case of Haiti:

- * Economy – A one-to-one phoneme/grapheme (sound/letter) relationship ensured that any given sound was represented by the same letter or group of letters.
- * Ecology – This took into account the compatibility of the language with which the Creole coexists.
- * Technology – Availability of symbols/letters in current use on mechanical devices. This constraint has now been removed with advances in digital technology.
- * Universality – That was the most important principle, as the main goal was that the written form had to be mutually intelligible, so that we could share each other's work and have access to each other's documentation.

These principles have been applied in the retrieval and translation of early historical accounts as well as current developmental work on the languages. In this regard, the work of the FRC and other related agencies in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Haiti have set the parameters for collaborative work on addressing historic inequalities, as well as programming for redress and representation. ■

Notes

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Making records and information management culturally relevant in the Caribbean

Sparkle N. Ferreira

The Caribbean is a melting pot of people of different ethnic backgrounds, rich cultural heritage and history recorded not only in our publications (formal records) but so too in our music, art, festivals, food, and memories (informal records). A significant amount of information about our history and culture is also stored within the oral traditions of our societies.

To give an example, calypsos¹ capture political and socio-economic conditions of the period within which they were created. In a speech given by former Barbados Attorney General Sir David Simmons, he stated “...we cannot properly assess the social and political history of the people of the region without understanding and appreciating our oral traditions including the calypso and the genius of its several practitioners” (Simmons, 2020).

Similarly, in the work environment, records are not only created by formal transactions such as in procurement, administration and human resources functions, but are also created by more informal means such as through questionnaires, employee retreats, employee presentations, and staff meetings. These foster the creation of cultural records within an Organisation. One may say that the true culture of an Organisation exists within the informal records, created, managed, shared and stored by and amongst its employees.

Thus, it is important to consider policies, standards and procedures that are more conducive to both the organisation and national cultures for each of the Caribbean territories. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Historically, international policies, legislations and standards as best practices and ideals have either been accepted by Caribbean governments or imposed by foreign entities, for example during colonialism. Like our various forms of government and business operating systems, Records and Information Management (RIM) infrastructure is no different, as it is not “native” but “foreign,” not growing out of conditions of the existing society but inspired by distant examples” (Hurwitz, 1966).

In other words, the systems that have been adopted have been designed, either in part or in their entirety, from international models with very little initiative taken to formulate records management systems, policies, standards and/or legislation that are inherently Caribbean. Often, these international structures are not easily adaptable to the Caribbean modes and practices of work and with the lack of appropriate standards, RIM programs continue to struggle to meet the needs of the organisations they serve. One may even argue that the best-practices and impositions have created a schizophrenia because not only are the standards not practicable, but the resources are also not affordable nor available. Thus, records management in the Caribbean, when compared to the standards set by the United States and Australia will never be good enough, if we continue to make comparisons.

Cultural considerations for record-keeping in the Caribbean

Organisations that opt to use international standards such as those of the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), United States Department of Defence (DOD) and even Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), later encounter challenges in implementation and maintenance of

the program. There is often a conflict between in-house convention or what is also known as precedent (culture) and policy. Policy is not always based on convention, nor convention on policy. This often results in many challenges in the workplace over what is considered organisational culture and best practice and at times among legislation, organisational culture/policy and best practice.

It should be noted that for many Organisations, best practice is that which is stated within the international laws, policies and standards or the actual activities commonly practiced within international Organisations and not what is conventionally practised in-house. It is therefore important to consider the culture of the Organisation and what precedents have been set and why these were established, to find a balance between best practice policy and conventional practices to manage and hopefully eliminate the challenges being experienced.

RIM legislation and standards such as ISO and HIPAA are excellent reference documents and have a solid place in the field of record and information management. However, information specialists in the Caribbean ought to consider these as foundation documents as opposed to a template for wholesale implementation. ISO 15489 for example, provides an excellent starting point for the drafting of RIM policies and what should be considered and possibly excluded from any RIM program.

However, the specific details of how the foundation principles of RIM will be applied, staffing structures, how information flows within the organization, storage and handling equipment and practices, access and permissions are unique to the organizations within which they exist. In other words, RIM programmes must be customised for each agency/organisation/ministry as each one is different from the other. It is therefore necessary to consider that organisational culture is not fixed and so it is important to revisit organisational needs and wants periodically to ensure that the implemented programme is still relevant.

Current state of RIM in the Caribbean

The practice of record-keeping, in both the public and private sectors, is in transition from a predominantly low-level function to one requiring scholarship and strategic management. To ensure its success, it is important to examine and resolve the challenges faced whilst understanding the vision, mission, and strategic objectives of each entity to ensure that the program being designed is a “best fit”. According to Victoria Lemieux in her review of the Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Community, there is need to ensure:

... effective and efficient governance arrangements that support good decision making, successful implementation of the regional agenda and accountability by all actors. It also includes carrying out reforms of state institutions to enhance decision-making, implementation, accountability and enforcement of laws and policies (Lemieux, 2018).

A similar opinion was expressed by the International Council on Archives (ICA) and the International Conference of Information Commissioners, supported by ARMA International, CODATA, Digital Preservation Coalition, Research Data Alliance, UNESCO Memory of the World and World Data System, which developed the statement “COVID-19: The duty to document does not cease in a crisis, it becomes more essential” (ICA, 2020). The statement calls on government ministries/public bodies and private entities to be proactive in their approach to the management of records and information.

For some public and private entities, there is also a considerable lack of the resources that are required to meet international best practices/standards. Firstly, most, if not all the tools required for the implementation of a RIM program in compliance with international best practice standards are only available from international suppliers. From storage equipment to conservation tools, the challenge is not only ease of access but the need for a steady flow of foreign exchange not only to purchase but also to maintain these systems and tools. In instances where

storage equipment cannot be purchased, there is a need to source appropriate space locally to store the records either onsite or at an offsite location.

Similarly, there are high costs associated with the purchase of records and information management software. These costs are not one-time fees as organizations will need to consider licensing and maintenance costs, which are often yearly fees. It is important, therefore, that consideration be given not only to increasing the funding of information units, but also to sourcing local suppliers and/or constructing our own storage systems and/or units locally to supply the needs of information units across the region.

Secondly, while training opportunities have increased over time, these have been limited to more tertiary level opportunities, as opposed to certificate programs and certifications from local and/or regional institutions. These challenges are not only due to a lack of problems, but also a lack of skilled personnel to teach the desired courses. Specialists in the field have therefore had to pay to attend online programs based in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and others to obtain the desired qualifications. As a result, many of the information specialists within the Caribbean have obtained their training through work experiences with many leading the RIM movement based on seniority and general “know-how”. Thus, there is a need provide more cost-effective and accessible training programs at all levels, which will be designed from the real-life perspectives and experiences of individuals and organizations within the region.

Taking into consideration the earlier perspective about culture and its importance in conceptualizing an RIM framework, this is equally important when considering an appropriate legislative framework. Much of our legislation has been based on international laws from Canada and the United Kingdom, where the culture is different from the Caribbean. This often results in lacunas between different laws and institutional practices. This is most evident with the rise of legislation such as freedom of Information, privacy, and information rights.

In a roundtable discussion on information legislation in the Caribbean, it was stated that “The Caribbean region is scarce in timely and publicly available official data and information. Due to current developments in the corona pandemic a sea of misinformation, disinformation was rising” (UNESCO, 2020). According to Ms. Kiran Maharaj, President of the Media Institute of the Caribbean, “Access to Information is truly an underpinning of democracy where transparency is needed to ensure the public’s best interest is served. For societies to develop in the best way possible we must stay informed and empowered with the truth” (UNESCO, 2020).

Finally, there is a need for the migration of records – digitizing/automating work/ records/ information – to digital platforms without the analog baselines. Information units in the Caribbean must explore new ways to provide access to information without compromising the integrity of the records and information. In the world of work, there is a need to not only digitize records for access, but also automate business processes to ensure greater efficiency across the organization and increased collaboration between and amongst all stakeholders. This will guarantee increased confidence in the organization, increased productivity, and would allow for staff to work smarter as records and information are easily available and accessible to all.

Recommendations

The following are a few recommendations when considering a Caribbean RIM framework:

1. Consideration must be given to what constitutes a record within Caribbean society. Currently, the imported RIM systems and standards do not cater for the management of informal or cultural records. Therefore, policies, storage requirements, preservation methods and conservation techniques will all need to be considered when re-considering RIM strategies in the region.

2. There is need for increased collaboration amongst all government archives and independent professional bodies such as the Caribbean

Regional Branch on the International Council on Archives (CARBICA) and others to decide on regional best practices and standards for effectively implementing international precepts. We have already established that the adoption of foreign systems and standards often conflict with our culture and structures, therefore it is important to analyse the cultures of the Caribbean, define what is a record in the Caribbean context, what is necessary to manage the records in the region, identify the risks associated with the management of these records, understand the differences and needs of each of the individual Caribbean territories and finally develop the appropriate legislations, policies and standards. It is important to note that to accomplish this, Caribbean information practitioners cannot work in isolation. They must consult with other subject matter experts, such as legal experts to determine what is applicable to Caribbean societies and bravely declare what is not realistic.

3. Finally, there is a need to consider an information governance (IG) framework for Caribbean societies. According to one of the leaders in records management *ARMA International*, information governance is “the overarching and coordinating strategy for all organizational information. It establishes the authorities, supports, processes, capabilities, structures, and infrastructure to enable information to be a useful asset and reduced liability to an organization, based on that organization’s specific business requirements and risk tolerance” (ARMA, 2021).

A Caribbean IG framework would allow for a more structured approach to the management of records and information across the region. It would allow for the better management of the risks identified by Caribbean organisations in both the public and private sectors and would allow for the implementation of the right tools needed to minimise and/or mitigate these risks.

In conclusion, while this is certainly not an exhaustive list, it does provide a good starting point for the Caribbean region as we improve our records and information maturity. It also provides a foundation for other post-colonial societies to

reconsider their own records and recordkeeping systems and its relevance to the societies within which they operate.

It is critical that, as the world evolves and the need for more collaboration, sharing of records and information across borders and certainly more remote access within organisations, we re-envision records management away from the US and Australian models to that which is home-made and/or inherently Caribbean. ■

Note

1. Sometimes referred to as the national song of Trinidad and Tobago, Calypso (music) is “a kind of West Indian music or song in syncopated African rhythm, typically with words improvised on a topical theme” - extracted from the website of the National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS). (<https://www.nalis.gov.tt/Resources/Subject-Guide/Calypso>)

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Whose memory and why: A commentary on power and the construction of memory

Sandra Obradović

Within memory studies there has been a gradual move away from the dichotomous divide between individual and collective memory, with work emerging arguing for the importance of acknowledging the interrelations between self and other in processes of remembering. This strand of research conceptualizes remembering as an active process of construction, influenced by the context in which it takes place. Much of this work builds on the groundbreaking work by Bartlett in the early 20th century (Wagoner, 2017), but also as a reaction to literature that continues to separate the cognition of individuals from the socio-cultural setting in which it occurs.

At this intersection between the individual, the social and the context, remembering becomes a process further shaped by the underlying power dynamics that lend authority, credibility and ‘truth’ to specific version of both individual and collective memory. Particularly, we see this occurring in contexts of clear power asymmetries, where memory becomes constructed in reaction to the situational definition developed by the more dominant party (Brown & Reavey, 2017). Processes of remembering are thus not mere re-

trievals of existing information, but a negotiation, construction and at times, manipulation, of what is assumed to have occurred in the past.

This short commentary will explore the role of power in processes of remembering. It will do so by first considering what we mean by constructive memory, particularly drawing on Bartlett’s conceptualization. Secondly, the extent to which power has been considered in memory studies is discussed, arguing that this interrelationship is best captured within collective memory studies, particularly in politicized contexts. Following on from this, we explore how power-relations permeate three articles (Brockmeier, 2017; Brown & Reavey, 2017; and Wagoner, 2017).

While power is not an explicitly prominent feature of these articles, an analysis of them through this lens can offer new insights into how the construction and reconstruction of events, aesthetic objects, and scientific theories become shaped by the dominant socio-cultural movements and power-asymmetries between individuals, but also groups and cultures. This paper concludes with a discussion about the benefits of explicitly acknowledging the power-relations present in process of collective remembering and the implications that this has for how we understand what becomes remembered and how.

Constructive memory and its “flaws”

According to Wagoner (2017), studies on remembering which accept the constructed nature of memory, have tended to assume that this implies memory to be “flawed”, as inaccuracy becomes characteristic of it. This is particularly evident in studies of ‘false memory’, a field discussed and criticized by Brown and Reavey (2017). Wagoner argues that a second conceptualization of constructive memory exists, which lies closer to the original ideas of Bartlett from the early 20th century. Namely, by considering remembering as an active process of (re)construction, it offers memory a positive strength as it allows it to be flexible and future-oriented, adapting to new needs in an ever-changing world. This latter understanding of memory focuses less on the ex-

tent to which memories are “true” or “false”, but rather on the importance in connecting the past with the present and the future.

This was an important point that Bruner (1990) wished to add to Bartlett’s account of memory, by developing further how narratives shape processes of recall and remembering. Bruner argued that Bartlett’s reproduction experiments of the Native American folk tale, *War of the Ghosts*, became culturally conventionalized by participants in order for them to make sense not only to the participants themselves, but also for those assumed to be listening. Bruner thus argued that there was a dialogical function of recalling a past or retelling a story, in that remembering becomes an activity shaped by the interrelations between teller and listener, researcher and participants, or individual and collective. Wagoner illustrates this dialogical aspect of memory by mapping the ways in which the meaning of Bartlett’s work itself has changed over time, becoming shaped by the interaction between an individual’s background, the dominant socio-cultural trends of the time and other important social influences.

Before discussing this paper in more detail, it is important to consider the extent to which power has actually been part of research on memory studies, and the insights this has had to offer us so far.

Power in memory studies

Much work acknowledging the role of power in shaping what is remembered and how comes from the field of political psychology, peace psychology and intergroup conflict studies (Bartal, 2011; Leone & Mastrovito, 2010; Nicholson, 2016). These fields have explored the ways in which hegemonic representations of the past become part of reproducing and keeping alive hostile intergroup relations (Paez & Liu, 2011), how stigmatized pasts become re-imagined in order to serve protective identity functions (Obradović, 2016), and how institutions become part of shaping these memory processes by legitimizing specific versions of the past (Podeh, 2002; van

Ommering, 2015). This literature shows clearly what is at stake in processes of remembering, and the power one holds by being able to shape the ways in which the past is understood.

Research on collective continuity demonstrates the importance of linking the past, present and future in order to feel a sense of coherence, stability and collective belonging (Sani, Bowe, Herrera, Manna, Cossa, Miao & Zhou, 2007; Sani, 2010). These studies have demonstrated the interconnectedness between memory, identity, public commemorations of events and the ways in which groups, nations, and even continents choose to remember history. In particular, cross-cultural research by Liu and colleagues (Liu, Paez, Slawuta, Cabecinhas, Techio, Kokdermir et al., 2009; Cabecinhas, Liu, Klein, Mendes, Feijo and Niyubabwe, 2011) on representations of world history demonstrate the extent to which dominant nations and cultures, also become dominant actors and points of reference in memories of world history, even in less “globally” dominant cultures.

Certain countries thus hold the power to shape what is globally considered important to remember, but also what model of the nation and ideology considered acceptable. As Molden (2016) argues, “after 1989, it has become all but outrageous to argue, in mainstream media and discourse, outside the paradigm of market liberalism, as alternatives (communism, socialism) have been proclaimed historical errors that failed to survive the evolutionary competition of ideas.” (p.126). Thus, the ways in which we remember the past suggests a specific version of the present which is considered legitimate, just and “right”.

Another strand of research, while not within collective memory studies, has explored how power and the power-positions of specific social identities shape discourses and what can be said by whom (Duveen, 2001; Gillespie & Cornish, 2010; Linell, 2009, chapter 9; Psaltis & Duveen, 2007). As Gillespie & Cornish note, in an experimental setting, asymmetrical power relations in dialogue constrain not only what the subordinate say, but also what the dominant hears and accepts

as “real”. We see the importance of power-relations in dialogue and interaction in Brown and Reavey’s paper, particularly in their discussion of the police interrogation of Brendan Dassey (from the documentary *Making a Murderer*) but also in the power-dynamics between researcher-subject and parent-child. As will be discussed shortly, it is important to consider the ways in which language, both in how we talk about remembering within memory studies, as well as how discourses become sites of power-struggles in memory negotiation in everyday life situations.

While it may seem logical that power has taken a larger role in context of politics and collective memory, studies of cultural psychology would nonetheless equally benefit from acknowledging the importance of whose version of an event, person, or conflict, is accepted and reproduced. While perhaps less explicitly, the papers by Wagoner, Brockmeier and Brown and Reavey (2017) do address the role of power in shaping how we (re)construct individual memories, scientific theories and works of art. The following two sections will discuss how.

Language, collective memory and power

As Brown and Reavey (2017) argue, the language around memory, particularly the use of “true” and “false” memory becomes problematic as it conceptualizes memory not as a process of social construction, but an objective reality ‘out there’ to be uncovered. The dichotomy of true and false memory is rejected by the authors, and instead they argue for the need to consider the “setting-specificity” of remembering, where “memory is approached as a property of jointly-managed activities that occur in a definite time and place, and which have their own distinct norms and procedures as to what constitutes ‘truth’ and ‘falsity’.” (xx). By considering memory as contextually sensitive, and remembering as a reconstructive process, the authors echo Bartlett’s argument in *Remembering* (1932), and recognize the social influences that come to shape even the most individual memories, such as a balloon ride experienced as a child (which while “remem-

bered”, never actually took place).

By emphasizing the setting-specificity of remembering, the authors also acknowledge that “the power to manage and control the situation clearly lies with the institution and its representative (i.e. investigators, reporters, experimenters) in a way that is tangible to the participants.” We find traces of this type of argument in Bartlett’s work as well, particularly in his discussion on “tendencies” (Bartlett, 1923). When discussing social relationship tendencies, Bartlett includes within this category both dominance and submissiveness. As Wagoner (2017, p.11) explains:

“When there is asymmetry of power and status in a social relationship, the higher status individual or group takes on the dominance or assertive tendency, while the lower status actor takes on the submissive tendency. The dominant actor has influence through command and by making an impression on the other rather than being an expression of their way of thinking.”

Brown & Reavey’s article is a clear illustration of how this occurs. As the authors show, in contexts of police interrogations, childhood memories or accusations of sexual assault against famous individuals, those in positions of power and influence are also those who are able to specify the setting of remembering, and thus control what is remembered and how. As discussed in relation to collective memory studies within inter-group conflict contexts, having the power to get one’s version to become taken-for-granted, it comes as close to being “true” as possible. This in and of itself is a huge accomplishment.

Perhaps the case of Brendan Dassey becomes the most telling of this. Known from the documentary *Making a Murderer*, the young teenager is featured in the documentary when he is taken into custody and questioned at length for his involvement in the murder of a woman named Teresa Halbach. Throughout the interrogation, Brendan’s memory is scaffolded by po-

lice officers asking questions of confirmatory nature, construction one version of the past which is clearly contradicted by the version he tells his mother later on in the documentary. Brown and Reavey, using this example among others, illustrate how problematic it becomes to classify memory as “true” or “false”, and the extent to which the field of false memory studies accomplishes what it sets out to do.

As the paper shows, false memory studies give us little guidance in how to improve confidence in memory and aiding vulnerable individuals through the process of recollection. Instead, the constructive nature of memory has made memory flawed, leading to scepticism towards individual recall. This in turn has implications for how individuals are treated in settings where institutions or authorities have the power to set the framework in which remembering occurs. These can thus become part not of protecting and safeguarding individuals in vulnerable and victimized situations, but rather abusing their power-position to shape what these individuals remember to be “true”. We must therefore unearth and make explicit the power-asymmetries present in processes of remembering, moving away from the assumption that “false” memories are due to the inherent lack of individual cognitive abilities, and more the outcome of the malleability, and at times manipulation, of the dialogical activity of remembering.

Power in the sciences and arts

The importance of power is not limited to child-adult, individual-authority relations, but rather it also infiltrates larger, social processes of remembering. As Wagoner (this issue) shows, even scientific theories are not safeguarded from the constructive and context-specific nature of memory, but rather, their movement over history and time becomes shaped by the larger dominant trends within the science itself.

Focusing on the work of Bartlett, Wagoner asks the question “how did we get from one meaning of constructive to another?” and provides the answer by charting the (re)construc-

tion of Bartlett’s ideas and concepts over the last century. In doing so, Wagoner offers a detailed and extensive account of research reproducing Bartlett’s work on remembering, and the different turns these accounts have taken. Strikingly, the paper demonstrates how dominant movements within the field of psychology itself shaped the processes of (re)construction and even led to the replacement of his original concepts with concepts more suitably situated within the larger, dominant turn of psychology at the time.

Thus, here we see power working on a more subtle level via social influences, but also leading paradigms. Bartlett acknowledged the importance of social influences by considering construction as related to meaning-making taking place within a framework of familiarity, or common sense. In other words, remembering is always shaped by the social, cultural and ideological ideas dominant within the context in which the individual lives. Thus, the assimilation of Bartlett’s experiments within the familiar social, cultural and political backgrounds of researchers was anticipated by the theoretical work itself.

However, this process should not be assumed to occur as an accumulation, where new meaning is only added to pre-existing, unchanging knowledge and memories. Rather, remembering should be understood as a transformative process. As Wagoner writes in regards to Bartlett’s theorization about the constructive nature of remembering:

“[w]hile the first notion of ‘constructive’ highlights the flexible adaptation of a past standard to the present, the second more radical notion of construction was used by Bartlett to describe the process of welding together elements from divergent sources into a new form” (p. xx).

Perhaps Brockmeier’s paper (2017) on Picasso’s art shows best the ways in which the latter conceptualization of construction occurs in a real world context.

Brockmeier uses the work of Picasso as a case study to consider the interplay between in-

dividual and collective memory. However, even more revealing in the article is the power of Picasso to introduce and integrate African masks, and thus African culture, into the Western arts. Similarly to Brown and Reavey, as well as Waggoner, Brockmeier considered remembering (and forgetting) as a practice embedded within a larger social and cultural context, rejecting the assumption that individual memory is separated from its collective counterpart. Focusing in on Picasso and his art, Brockmeier demonstrates the benefits to taking a sociocultural approach to remembering. The approach emphasizes three important components of remembering; 1) mnemonic artefacts, 2) systems of signs and symbols and 3) the interconnections between individual and social/cultural memory.

Focusing in on Picasso and his famous *Les Femmes d'Alger* (O.J. no. 1149v), Brockmeier illustrates how power, within the larger backdrop of colonialism and global domination, enabled Picasso to introduce African culture and tradition into the Western art scene. As Brockmeier argues:

“[w]hile he gave centre stage to African art and promoted tribal masks to enigmatic artworks, this came at a price: the masks became famous as icons of Western art, not African art. Before and outside of this implementation they were ‘primitive’ and certainly not considered as significant artefacts within their own indigenous cultural traditions.”

Returning again to Bartlett, we see the constructive process of remembering as the fusion of diverse elements, traditions and culture to create something new and innovative. However, while artists previously had fused Western and non-Western symbols within their work it was the influential social and cultural position of Picasso that opened up the stage for the inclusion of non-Western symbols within Western art. Thus, while “constructive” processes occur constantly, it is social influence and power which will determine which one’s are remembered on a larger, collective scale.

Situating Picasso’s work within the larger, global context, Brockmeier points out that the criticality towards Picasso and ‘his’ masks changed in the wake of postcolonialism, moving from a perspective of colonial theft and cultural exploitation to a consideration of Picasso’s art as an act of recognition of another culture. Thus, we can see the attempt by non-Western artists to “reclaim” the Picasso’s masks as African masks, considering Picasso’s work as praising, rather than dominating, the “Africaness” inherent in *Les Femmes d'Alger*.

The power of remembering

This short commentary has explored the role of power in shaping what is remembered and how, particularly in contexts of socio-cultural psychology, where this intersection has been less explored. The papers in this section were discussed, considering the ways in which power-asymmetries on both the interpersonal, but also national and global level, allow for certain memories to become more prevalent and accepted as “truth”.

However, the language around remembering which distinguishes between “true” and “false” memories can become detrimental as it moves away from considering constructive memory as adaptive and a consequence of flexible human cognition, to considering memories as inherently flawed and prone to inaccuracy. As this commentary has showed, it is often power relations which come into play to shape what memories are considered more legitimate than others, and thus inaccuracy might not always be a flaw of individual memories, but rather lack of ability, influence or power to get one’s memories heard and accepted.

Finally, then, it is perhaps worthwhile to take a critical approach to memory, unearthing the power relations that underlie the process of remembering as it occurs at the intersection between self, other and the object of memory. A potential way of doing so is by considering more openly and critically the socio-cultural context in which remembering occurs. Who is doing the remembering and for what purpose? Who is the

listener, or audience, of this act of remembering, and what is their role? Finally, what are the implications that come with one version of remembering over another?

Asking these questions, even within contexts of socio-cultural studies of remembering can provide a starting point for more explicitly acknowledging how power shapes memory. This in turn hopefully allows us to deal better with the scepticism felt towards individual recollections of events, particularly vulnerable individuals or recollections of traumatic occurrences. Together this will offer a better understand of the ways in which the context in which remembering occurs comes to shape memory itself. ■

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Communication for all in the digital age: An African perspective

Charles Okigbo

Communication for All is the principle that everyone needs relevant information and communication in their daily interactions with each other and as active participants in the inescapable exchanges that characterize their membership of and participation in society. Human communication, in all its varied forms, is manifest in interpersonal, intercultural, international, organizational, and many other exchanges all of which underline the limitless scope for using messages to inform, educate, persuade, and entertain.

Regardless of our level of competence as communicators, from novices to experts, we must engage in this universal characteristic of humans, hence the universality of the principle of Communication for All. The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) rightly adopted Communication for All as its guiding philosophy and this has endeared it to many and earned it a unique position of honour among international religious and communication associations and organizations. WACC argues that “everyone has the right to communicate and to be in communication, in the same way that they have the right to food, shelter, and security” (Lee, 1986).

Although Communication for All is intuitively appealing, only a few organizations have given it the recognition it deserves, and among

these are The Association of Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH) and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). TASH created the “Communication for All Campaign”, which is aimed at promoting effective communication for people with disabilities or challenges. It was guided in its belief that regardless of any physical or mental challenges that we may face, we can all benefit from proper uses of communication. The TASH campaign emphasizes the inculcation of skills and knowledge that promote personal and group development through awareness, professional skills, access to communication technologies, instruction, and support (TASH, 2023).

WACC’s book *Communication for All* (1985) carries the subtitle “New World Information and Communication Order”, which was a major preoccupation of UNESCO in the late 1970s and the 1980s, culminating in the publication of the MacBride Commission Report (1980) and the funding of major communication research projects on information imbalance and news flow. UNESCO supported a new world order, with emphasis on balanced information and communication flows among national, regional, and global partners to ensure a new, more just, and more efficient world information and communication order. We are now in the digital communication age, where the concept needs to be propagated more urgently, especially in the less industrialized countries that suffered marginalization in the previous age of analogue, hegemonic, and imperialistic communication. This new digital age of communication brings much promise for fairness and equity in information flow and communication use for previously disadvantaged audiences and communities.

Communication for all in the digital age

WACC’s mantra of Communication for All is even more relevant today in our contemporary communication environment of digital, virtual, 24/7, limitless communication that fulfills Marshall McLuhan’s concept of a global village. Our contemporary digital communication age started

with the advent of the information superhighway, which metamorphosed into the ever-escalating phenomenon of internet advances and the latest developments in artificial intelligence. Not only can we create unimaginable communication content such as trolls, fake news, misinformation, and deep fakes, etc., but these can be disseminated virtually to all world regions at once, faster than the speed of sound.

The latest developments in the digital age include the use of artificial intelligence and avatars that might genuinely support Communication for All in a world order that we could not have imagined in the 1970s and 1980s. The digital age has compacted our experiences in many respects, not the least of which is the erosion of the erstwhile marginalization associated with the old world of developing and developed countries. The imbalance has become less controversial as development agencies such as The World Bank and UN organizations emphasize more targeted global development, most recently through the Millennial Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Instead of the ideological East/West blocs and the group of Non-aligned Countries of the 1970s and 1980s, we now have an international consensus on the value of setting transnational development targets across the globe, tackling poverty, hunger, health, education, water, energy, economic growth, inequalities, as well as partnerships for these goals.

One of the most perplexing problems of the era of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was the challenge of a free and more balanced flow of information and how the needs of the less industrialized countries linked with the flow of information between different countries and world regions. Today, free and balanced flow are largely irrelevant because the contemporary environment characterized by 24/7 virtual communication has yielded an open system that is better and more equitable than what we could have imagined. This is essentially Communication for All, which is as applicable in Africa as it is in other regions of the world,

especially the Global South. If communication in Africa today is no longer as peripheral and marginal as in the past, what could be the ramifications of Communication for All as applied to Africa?

Orality, indigeneity, and ambivalent modernity

An African perspective on Communication for All has at least three distinct features that reflect traditional African culture: Orality, the attraction of indigeneity, and ambivalent modernity.

African communication is quintessentially oral because of the late arrival of written languages among African peoples, despite the historicity of hieroglyphics in Egypt. It was this reliance on oral communication that led Ugboajah (1986) to propose his foundational African communication paradigm of “*ora media*”, premised on the combination of traditional cultural symbols and aural features. Close to orality is the fascination with indigeneity and authentic African traditional communication expressed in spoken, performative, and symbolic communication messages and artefacts. More than a century after the arrival of foreign mass media forms in Africa, indigenous forms are still powerful and pervasive in African communication.

Nevertheless, modern communication tools are prevalent now in Africa as in other world regions because of the affordability of the new information technologies such as internet tools, cell phones, social media, and the increasing use of artificial intelligence. The use of new communication gadgets creates ambivalent situations because some are embraced by people who at the same time are enamoured of traditional ways of communication.

So, what is the African perspective on Communication for All? This is ever evolving and will include the general and universalistic expressions by TASH that all people are deserving of the purposeful uses of communication, without exception, as well as WACC’s principle that communication is a human right. UNESCO’s drive for more balanced treatment and flow of information also applies to African communica-

tion. In addition to these universalistic standards, an African perspective will include the uniquely African communication characteristics of orality, indigeneity, and modernity. We can conclude here that Communication for All in Africa is multi-layered and complex.

In the contemporary digital communication age, we are witnessing African countries adding a new twist to the multiple layers of Communication for All. This is seen in such areas as Nollywood films and home videos from Nigeria and other African countries in a world where Africa is increasingly becoming a more important player in the global, digitally connected and more open communication environment of many voices – in which some are louder than others. However, while everybody has a chance to be heard in the true sense of Communication for All, this does not mean that all voices will be heard equally. There is no doubt that some voices dominate and carry further than others. The digital age sometimes makes it appear like many voices, one world. At other times, it appears to be many worlds, one voice.

One world or continent, many voices: Where is Africa?

Africa's place in global communications does not reflect the continent's demographic position as the second largest grouping (1.426 billion) behind China (1.454 billion). India comes a close third with 1.416 billion. Many factors are responsible for this systematic and age-old neglect, which is not likely to change soon. Among the most critical factors are the historical injustice of the 1844 arbitrary carving up of the continent at the Berlin Conference, the colonial policies of exploitation rather than genuine development, and the pervasive corruption that characterizes many African governments. Development in Africa has suffered serial setbacks in many African countries such that today the continent accounts for many of the poorest countries in the world. The future holds better promise for greater development of African economies, especially if they remain peaceful, adopt pro-growth policies,

and embrace higher educational standards.

The world is increasingly moving towards a unipolar global situation since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989. Although there are still a few outliers such as Russia and North Korea, occasionally with China joining them on some ideological issues, many of the countries in the world are closer today than at any time in the past. Now more than ever before, African countries are closer to a situation of One Continent, Many Voices, but slowly moving towards the dream of improved growth and development that will lead to an African Renaissance, which is the ultimate goal of the Africa Union's *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*.

Communication for All in Africa is desirable to overcome some of the development deficits that have held the continent down from pre-colonial times to the present. The contribution of Communication for All is so fundamental to national, regional, and global development, it is the theme of the forthcoming book edited by Jan Servaes and Muhammad Jameel Yusha'u titled *SDG 18: Communication for All*, in the Palgrave Macmillan SDG Series. The thesis of the publication is that "the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the successor Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are incomplete because of the absence of a specific focus on communication for all, which should ideally be a separate standalone goal SDG 18" (Okigbo, 2022). The 17 SDGs were selected to provide the focus for redressing local, national, regional, and global underdevelopment by targeting the key objectives which include eradicating poverty, ending hunger, providing universal access to healthcare and education, addressing climate change, and enhancing partnerships for these goals.

Many development communication experts accept that Communication for All is necessary for the SDGs to stress the centrality and urgency of communication in any serious development and social change enterprises. In this book, Okigbo and Ogbodo (2023) argue that Africa and other industrializing nations need

strategic communication and Communication for All to achieve their sustainable development goals, without which meaningful socio-political development will not be possible. African development continues to be problematic with many countries performing below par on many of the SDGs, as the continent looks towards the 2030 target date for all the participating world regions and individual countries, and 2063 for the African Agenda for Development.

There have been some setbacks in African development, but it is not an entirely woeful experience because some encouraging successes have been recorded in Africa. It is the prospects for greater achievements that have led to the drafting of Africa's own development forward-looking plan named Agenda 2063, which has 20 individual achievable goals and the following seven critical aspirations:

- * A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.
- * An integrated continent; politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance.
- * An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and rule of law.
- * A peaceful and secure Africa.
- * Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics.
- * An Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential offered by African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.
- * An Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner (Africa Union, 2023).

These aspirations provide guideposts for achievable targets that individual African countries are supposed to adopt and modify to suit their extant conditions. Mirroring the MDGs and SDGs, but more strategically directed at the most pressing problems of African development, these seven aspirations deserve to be promoted among all segments of African societies through

purposive strategies of Communication for All so that Agenda 2063 would be a household concept all over Africa.

Top 10 areas for Agenda 2063: Implications for communication for all in Africa

A discourse analysis by Nhamo (2017) of the Agenda 2063 official document showed that the top 10 issues (ranked) are women, peace, youth, technology, trade, gender, education, governance, infrastructure, and inclusiveness. Africa has had a vision of its development right from the early days of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the struggles of the individual African countries for political independence in the 1960s. From the experiences of the MDGs and SDGs, African leaders now have a clearer vision of the continent's development priorities as expressed in Agenda 2063. Having a vision is one thing and being able to mobilize the resources to achieve it is another. It is instructive to examine how the top three issues of women, peace, and youth can benefit from purposeful attention to Communication for All.

Each of these three issues plays a significant role in contemporary African development as well as the expectations for continued growth and development in future. The first issue – women – touches on other aspects of development such as gender, health, children, education reproductive rights, and population growth. Equally important is the need to treat all members of society with respect and accord equal rights to all individuals. Communication for All is central in all these expectations of better treatment of women in Africa so that they can contribute maximally to African development.

It is not surprising that peace is the second issue because it is of great import. The poorest countries in Africa are usually the most challenged for maintaining peaceful coexistence among their ethnic groups, while the most peaceful countries tend to be among the most advanced. Civil strife and wars reflect breakdowns in communication and conviviality, and so it is expected that good applications of Communication for All should

improve the chances for peace within and between African countries.

The third value is youth, which holds great promise for continued development, but only if the quality of the labour force improves significantly through better education and improved health conditions. Africa's demographic dividend is best felt in the youthful age of the present population, and this has implications for political development and eventually the realization of the aspirations expressed in the Africa Agenda 2063. Successfully addressing these three top issues of women, peace, and youth in African development will require purposeful applications of the principles of Communication for All, especially in this age of digital communication.

Conclusion

Africa needs strategic uses of communication in support of development, especially in this digital communication age. It is recommended, therefore, that Communication for All be adopted as a cardinal principle in efforts to implement the ambitious plans of the Africa Agenda 2063. This is the set of development targets that will bring about sustainable development of the continent in the key areas of prosperity, integration, good governance, peace, cultural identity, people-centeredness, and resilience. Africa, as the second largest demographic grouping in the world cannot afford to lag behind in global human development, and making Communication for All a cardinal principle is an imperative for success in implementing the ambitious plans of Agenda 2063, lest it becomes another good design that fails in implementation. Advances in the new information technologies and digital communication underline the benefits of science and new knowledge in improving the human condition for all peoples, especially women and youth in Africa.

In the long run, what emerges from the widespread application of Communication for All in Africa will be a new vista of genuine hope based on systematically assailing the pressing challenges and obstacles that have constrained

development on the continent. The promise of an African renaissance rests on the strategic uses of communication, specifically Communication for All, to get all segments of African societies to contribute meaningfully to attaining the ambitious but achievable objectives of the Africa Agenda 2063. Anything short of this will be self-defeating. ■

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Berlin (Germany) 2023

At the 73rd International Film Festival Berlin held February 16-26, 2023, the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize in the International Competition to *Tótem* directed by Lila Avilés (Mexico, Denmark, France, 2023).

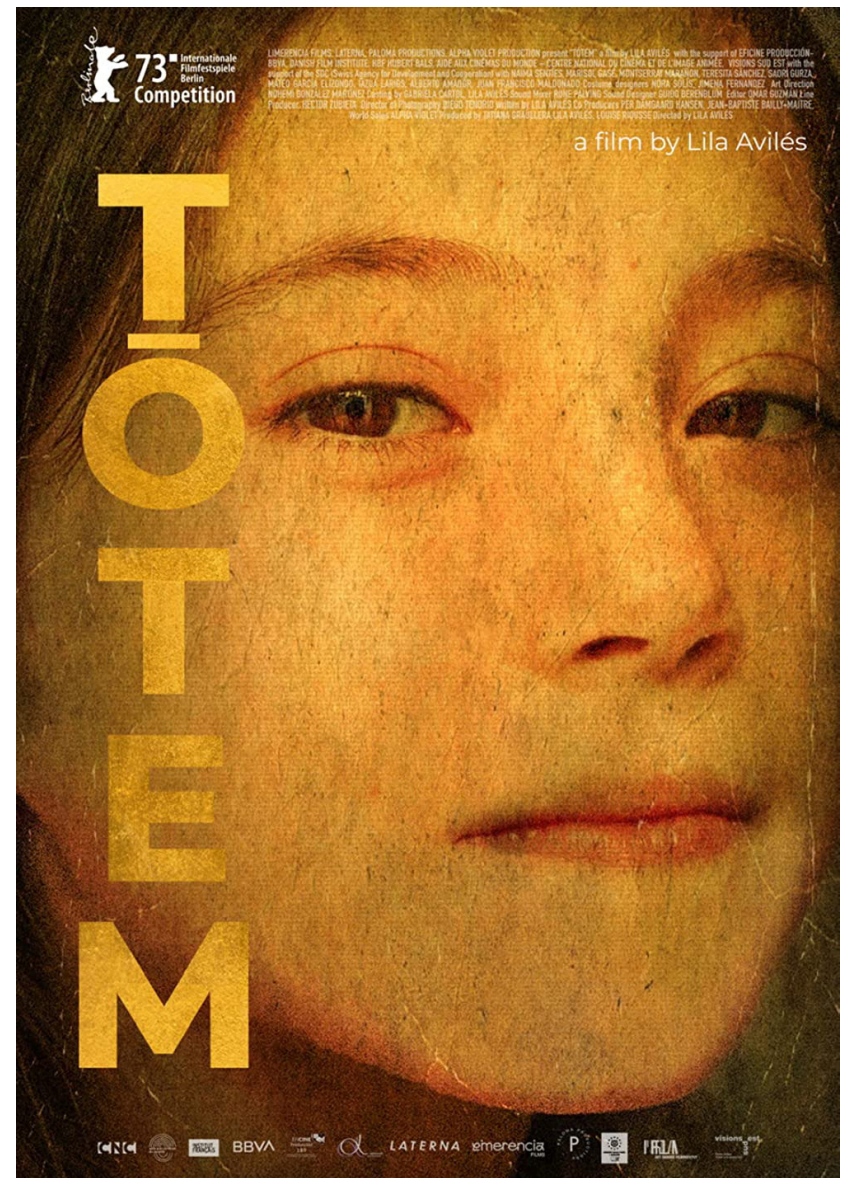
Motivation: The film is a moving portrait of a family dealing with the terminal illness of a young man. The story is told from the point of view of his little daughter and unfolds during one special day. The jury was genuinely blown away by the complex and sensitive way of illustrating the love holding this family together, neither false nor idealized. It also highlights how Mexican culture deals with death and celebrates life at the same time.

In addition, the jury awarded a Commendation to *Sur L'Adamant* (On the Adamant) directed by Nicolas Philibert (France, Japan, 2022) for its respectful approach to a group of mentally challenged people in a daycare-centre on a barge on the river Seine by fostering a sense of community.

In the Panorama, the Jury awarded its Prize to *Sages-femmes* (Midwives) directed by Léa Fehner (France, 2023) for its strong and genuine depiction of the midwife ward of a public hospital in Paris.

Motivation: The film shows the intensity of their daily work and the challenges they encounter and overcome. The film brilliantly shows the shortcomings of the system on the one hand and the dedication of the staff accompanying women who are about to bring new lives into the world on the other hand.

In the Forum, the Jury awarded its Prize to *Jaii keh khoda nist* (Where God Is Not) directed



by Mehran Tamadon (France, Switzerland, 2023).

Motivation: How can the horror of political imprisonment and torture be told? The Iranian filmmaker and architect Mehran Tamadon, who has lived in France since his youth and returns to his homeland time and again for projects, has found an impressive way. He places his characters Homa Kalhori, Taghi Rahmani and Mazyar Ebrahimi in a space which recreates their former prisons – “where God is not”, as one of the jailors said. And as such, becomes a rogue scenario that triggers in them memories of past suffering, humiliation and torture. An original cinematic device allowing for a performative re-enactment to sharing their harrowing experiences, which becomes a denunciation of a reality that is still Iran’s nowadays. ■

Members of the 2023 Jury: Paul de Silva, Canada; Alberto Ramos Ruiz, Cuba; Anne le Cor, France; Arielle Domon, France; Kerstin Heinemann, Germany; Miriam Hollstein, Germany (President of the Jury).