Changing conceptions of intermediaries in development processes

Challenging the modernist view of knowledge, communication and social change

Rebecca Wolfe
October 2006

IDS Knowledge Services

About IDS Knowledge Services and the Strategic Learning Initiative (SLI)

IDS Knowledge Services facilitate the exchange of development knowledge between continents, sectors and disciplines through a wide range of media, co-creating online information services and print publications with Southern partners.

The author of this publication was a member of the Strategic Learning Initiative (SLI), a time-bound initiative within Phase One of the Mobilising Knowledge for Development programme (MK4D) at the Institute of Development Studies, UK. MK4D is a DFID-funded project, managed and delivered by IDS Knowledge Services, and its Phase One ran from 2005-09 with a remit to promote evidence-based learning about knowledge, information and communication in international development.

SLI was guided by the belief that development and social change are greatly enhanced by the availability, accessibility and use of research and information, and:

- aimed to stimulate learning and develop capacity among information and knowledge intermediaries who share this belief
- facilitated learning and innovation by sharing critical thinking and examples of best practice
- drew on four areas of expertise: Capacity Development, Research, Marketing and Monitoring and Evaluation.

In Phase Two of MK4D, the **Impact and Learning Team** is taking forward the values, work and learning from SLI, exploring in greater depth the role and impact of capacity development, marketing, and monitoring & evaluation on knowledge, information and communication in international development, both in IDS and further afield.

Copyright

This publication was first published in 2006, and then republished online in 2011.

Changing Conceptions of Intermediaries in Development Processes: Challenging the Modernist View of Knowledge, Communication and Social Change

Abstract

Although modernist economic theories and policies are now widely considered to be invalid in achieving poverty reduction and lessening inequalities, the understanding of change and the epistemological assumptions that underpin the modernist framework continue to inform policy and limit the understanding of information and communication approaches in development today.

This paper examines the role of intermediaries - the actors who are involved in processes of generating, interpreting, organising or communicating information, within the modernist framework. It challenges the modernist assumptions that knowledge is objective and communication is a linear process of transferring knowledge, finding instead that knowledge is socially constructed and linked to people's values, beliefs, cultural practice and experience. Whose reality and what knowledge is regarded as legitimate are determined by epistemological, methodological and power hierarchies which combine and sideline alternative perspectives.

This analysis makes it possible to distinguish new functions for intermediaries beyond disseminating information. These include providing a platform for alternative perspectives, facilitating discussion, advocacy and assisting in processes of learning. Intermediaries are recognised as political actors in the communication process who are able to empower different individuals and groups by providing them with a space to voice their opinions or research and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.

Contents

1. Introduction

The impact of information in development has been widely debated (Menou 1993, IDS 1994), yet there is a lack of conceptual understanding about the actors involved in communicating information and their contribution to development processes. One reason for this omission can be found in the number of different entities performing the role (for example libraries, extension workers, trainers, the media and research communication workers) and the diverse ways in which their work is manifested – operating at different levels, with different methods of communication, degrees of formality, intention, and so on. The diversity of actors in information and knowledge processes has contributed to the lack of recognition of their commonality - their shared identity as intermediaries, which we broadly define as actors who are involved in processes of generating, interpreting, organising or communicating information for a particular purpose or to particular social groups (Vogel et al 2006).

The potential contribution of intermediaries in development processes has received varying degrees of attention from development stakeholders involved in defining, designing and implementing interventions. Many references to the intermediary role can be found in agricultural extension literature. The traditional role of extension workers is viewed as being to transmit experts' knowledge about new technology and techniques to farmers whose attitudes are considered to be barriers to improvements in productivity (Melkote and Steves 2001). This conception of the role is rooted in the modernist paradigm, which dominated theory and policy in the development industry from the 1940s to the 1960s and which continues to shape many information and communications approaches today, within which knowledge is considered to be objective and communication a linear process of transferring knowledge.

It transpires that roles of intermediaries are defined and restricted by the paradigm through which they are considered and the understandings embedded within these about the nature of knowledge, processes of communication and social change. This paper examines conceptualisations of information and knowledge intermediaries that are informed by the modernist paradigm, and then unravels and challenges the assumptions that underpin this view of knowledge. Through this, alternative frames of reference are exposed, within which it is possible to reconstruct models of intermediary roles, and to discern different types; specifically knowledge intermediaries as distinct from information intermediaries. The aim of this – the development of a better conceptual understanding of information and knowledge intermediaries, alongside a greater understanding of their potential contribution to development processes - is to facilitate learning and to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of the sector.

2. Modernist views of development and knowledge

Modernisation was the dominant paradigm in development for the two decades following World War Two. Economic theories, in particular Rostow's stages of economic growth, formed the basis of many development policies. Rostow (1960) depicted the course of development as a uni-directional evolutionary process represented by five stages of growth: traditional society, preconditions for take-off, take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption. The model of development is Northern industrialised societies which developing countries can catch-up with by adopting their attributes and replicating the paths of development that they supposedly undertook (Lerner 1967).

There are several assumptions embedded within this modernist view. Specifically, it is presumed that the path of development is an evolutionary process from 'traditional' to 'modern' that all countries must pass through. Its ideals are based on Enlightenment thinking which rejected primitive and traditional behaviours in favour of rationality and progress (Leys 1996). This creates hierarchies of progress, and the view that countries in the earlier stages of development should aspire to be more like developed countries.

The modernist paradigm is informed by its assumptions about what constitutes and counts as knowledge. It is founded on a positivist perspective, which recognises only that which can be derived from empirical experience. For positivists, other forms of knowledge such as abstractions or extrasensory experience are disqualified because they cannot be scientifically verified. Positivism is based on the ontological assumption that reality is made up of discrete events which exist independently of people's observations of them and, as such, reality can be interpreted objectively and experienced by all people in the same way. Events are explained by their relations to each other, and they are shaped by systems of laws and rules which are expressed as theories and tested against empirical evidence. The process of enquiry is considered to be value-free, and researchers detached from the topic under investigation.

Although modernist economic theories and policies are now widely considered to be invalid in achieving poverty reduction and lessening inequalities, the understanding about change and the epistemological assumptions that underpin the modernist framework continue to inform policy and are still relevant to the analysis of information and communication approaches in development today.

2.1. Information and communication processes informed by modernist views

How do these views of knowledge and progress then feed into information and communication processes? The assumption that knowledge is fixed and interpreted by all people in the same way means that it can be transferred and applied generally to different circumstances, without its content or meaning being altered. Communications approaches are then viewed as processes where experts transfer their knowledge to less informed people. One model that exemplifies this approach is the Shannon-Weaver model in which communication is described as process of information being transferred from an active sender to a passive receiver (Melkote and Steeves 2001). Communication, in this view, is regarded as a linear, one-way process, offering no opportunity for users to respond. It assumes that the provision of information is sufficient to ensure that the content will be understood and used in the intended manner.

When modernisation theory dominated development thinking from the 1940s to the 1960s, communication approaches were considered essential for the circulation of Western knowledge and ideas to the rest of the world. Powerful people in industrialised countries prescribed their knowledge and information on individuals and societies with the intent to 'enlighten' them and change their attitudes and behaviours from 'traditional' to 'modern' (Leys 1996). Schramm (1967:18), for example, describes communication as a means to 'implant and extend the idea of change, to raise the aspirations of … people so that they want a larger economy and a modernised society.'

Waisbord offers a comprehensive review of communications approaches that have been employed by development professionals since the beginning of the development industry in the 1940s. The chronology highlights Rogers' 'Diffusion of Innovations' theory, which accords with modernist thinking and has been influential in informing the design of development policies. Rogers (1962) postulates that in local communities, the transference of new ideas is crucial for development as individuals are persuaded and encouraged to change their traditional ways of life.

Rogers' model describes five stages that individuals pass through in the adoption of innovations: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption. The diffusion of innovations theory is a behaviour-change model of communication whereby the active source introduces a new idea to a passive receiver with the intent to 'create or change his attitude toward the idea, or persuade him to adopt the idea as part of his regular behaviour' (Rogers 1962). The influence of these behaviour-change ideas is evident in traditional extension models and in later development communication programmes, including social marketing approaches during the 1970s which used advertising and marketing techniques to promote pro-social behaviour (Waisbord 2001).

2.2. Conceptions of Intermediaries within the modernisation paradigm

The perception of intermediaries that derives from the modernist paradigm is also shaped by these conceptions of knowledge and communication. As knowledge can be treated as an object which can easily be stored, classified and transferred without its content being changed, the intermediary assumes the role in the communication chain of relaying this information to passive recipients and, in line with the diffusion of innovations theory, enlightening underprivileged people by providing access to scientific discoveries and technology (Röling 1994:126).

Intermediaries are perceived to be neutral conveyors of knowledge and information. Their values and beliefs do not influence the content that they make available and, as such, they are systems of information provision rather than actors in the communication process. Since it is assumed that the transfer of information is sufficient to convey the message, it is not the role of the intermediary to ensure that information is understood or to provide opportunity for feedback: dialogue is not invited in this model of communication.

As we learn from critiques of modernist views of knowledge, it is clear that the modernist paradigm provides an inadequate and unrealistic framework for understanding the role of intermediaries and their impact on development and social change. It is to these critiques that we now turn, in order to open up alternative possible frameworks of understanding.

3. Critique of modernist views of knowledge

Whilst modernist economic theories have been shown to be invalid, similarly, the beliefs that underpin the modernist view of knowledge, how it is acquired and communicated are disputed (McGrath 2001). Consequently, the paradigm provides an unrealistic portrayal of the role of intermediaries and their impact on development and social change. In this section we challenge the assumptions that inform modernist views of knowledge, communication and intermediaries, and suggest alternative conceptualisations. The following discussion focuses on four key assumptions around which critiques are centred: that there exists an objective reality, that the scientific method of enquiry is neutral, that knowledge can be stored, managed and transferred, and that communication is a linear process.

3.1. There exists an objective reality

The modernist paradigm has been challenged for its assumptions concerning the nature of knowledge: that knowledge is derived from empirical evidence and that events exist independently from their cultural and social context. Instead, the contextual framework of modernist epistemology and methodology is seen to affect what is considered to be valid knowledge, and to determine which information and whose understandings are given authority (Samoff and Stromquist 2001). Knowledge is thus hierarchical, with several types of hierarchies combining to award different levels of legitimacy and authority to different perspectives.

The modernist epistemology only recognises scientifically verified knowledge resulting in the marginalisation of critical lines of inquiry and a questioning approach is dismissed in favour of the quest for new knowledge (Preston 2002). Also, importantly, indigenous knowledge held by specific cultures is marginalised, as it is indicative of the possibilities of multiple perceptions and variable contexts, therefore contradicting the notion of objective knowledge.

Types of knowledge are also invalidated by the methodology through which they are analysed. Within the modernist view, knowledge that is empirically tested is perceived to be more legitimate than knowledge informed by other methodological techniques such as experiential or practical knowledge. These alternative processes of enquiry are sidelined and data is disqualified as 'inadequate, naive, unscientific or simply improbable' (Fairhead and Leach 1997:54). Fairhead and Leach illustrate how the act of prescribing authority to scientific methods of acquiring knowledge has, in the past, resulted in erroneous environmental policy prescriptions.
Instead of empirical evidence being the source of all knowledge, it has been argued that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge and thus human beings do not discover knowledge but they construct it (Schwandt 2002). Reality is a dynamic process which is re-produced by people who reflect on their interpretations and knowledge of it. This process is praxis – a cyclical course of action-reflection-action (Cole 1999). Further, Scoones and Thompson suggest that knowledge is produced and interpreted within people's different social and political circumstances resulting in multiple views of the world. Rather than being objective they view knowledge as 'engaged, value bound and context determined' (1993:9).

Knowledge and Power

One of the central problems with the assumption that knowledge is objective is that it does not allow for the possibility that power relations shape the different sources and types of knowledge. Foucault (1980) argues that the concepts of power and knowledge cannot be separated. He suggests that the term 'knowledge' should be replaced with 'knowledge claims' which acquire legitimacy through particular discourses and social contexts rather than experience. The exercise of power shapes and validates some types of knowledge claims over others (Radford 1992). As Foucault asserts: 'the criteria of what constitutes knowledge, what is to be excluded and who is designated as qualified to know, involves acts of power' (1972:61-4, cited in Scoones & Thompson 1994).

Most development knowledge is produced in Northern academic institutions, despite the fact that many researchers never directly experience poverty. Powerful actors in the development industry have control over knowledge and resources, and what they judge to be legitimate is likely to have more influence than alternative conceptions, particularly those held by Southern actors. Yankah (1999:13) suggests that research generated in Southern countries is disqualified because of:

> the subsumption of local intellectual paradigms under received Western hegemonies; the monopolistic control of the centre of academic authority; and subsequently the marginalisation of other intellectuals and the local academic agendas

This has implications for intermediaries in general: rather than being impartial conveyors of information, the institutions that they are associated with and the way that they are perceived by users in part determines the value given to the information that they transfer (Saywell and Cotton 1999).

There are several examples of Western research, or assumptions made by experts in Northern development agencies, governments and NGOs, having led to policy prescriptions with negative consequences (Fairhead and Leech 1997, Chambers 1997). Despite these errors, changes in policy often take a long time to transpire. Hoben (1998) suggests that assumptions embedded within development interventions are not easily challenged because they are inscribed within dominant discourses and powerful narratives. Narratives such as desertification caused by the woodfuel crisis in Africa (see Leech and Mearns 1996, and Crewe 1997), gain legitimacy because they are grounded in the cultural and political beliefs of powerful first-world experts. Dominant discourses subjugate alternative narratives and disqualify the knowledge of people marginalised by this as inadequate or unscientific. Through their actions, intermediaries may reinforce these relations. Alternatively, intermediaries could support people whose knowledge has been devalued or sidelined, by creating a space where discourses can be challenged with alternative perspectives.

3.2. The scientific method of enquiry is neutral

Claims that research is an independent process of discovering the truth do not reflect reality, where the views and interests of actors in the investigative process influence what research is conducted, the process of collecting data, and outcomes.

The scientific method fails to permit the research subject to play an active role in the process of researching because subjects are assumed to be passive sources of data. This poses problems when the subjects are humans themselves, susceptible to reactions and influences, conscious or sub-conscious, inherent in human nature. Charmaz and Mitchell (1997) suggest that research subjects can play an active role because they react to the researcher and situation, thus influencing outcomes. For instance, the subject may tell the researchers what they think the appropriate answer is rather than what they really think. On the other hand, they may deliberately lie if they don't agree with the researcher's agenda or are uncomfortable telling the truth.

Furthermore, the view that researchers are neutral observers is also disputable. Researchers and their understandings are influenced by the social, cultural, historical and political contexts in which they operate, which then influence the questions that they ask, their method of enquiry and subsequent interpretation of data (Denzin and Lincon 2000). As such, a researcher can be perceived as a 'central figure who influences, if not actually constructs the selection, collection and interpretation of data' (Finlay 2002:212).

The process of communicating research is not value-free either. Although intermediaries may consider themselves to be neutral, biases are found in sourcing, editorial and acquisition policies. When transferring information, intermediaries make judgements about what is good quality and relevant information, which are influenced by their own interests, world view and environment. Intermediaries are liable to award primacy to some viewpoints over others in the way that they choose to communicate information. If an intermediary's role involves editing research or information, what they choose to include and how it is set out involves making choices based on their own perspectives, which alters the way information is perceived.

These processes relate to Gidden's theory of structuration (1979), whereby human actions both structure and are structured by society. Intermediaries may be viewed as agents who reflect on their activities and carry out actions with consciousness and knowledgeability. Their actions are also influenced by the virtual structure within which they exist, i.e. their values and norms. In the process of communicating research information, intermediaries structure that information, and are in turn structured by the values and norms of their social context, which can have intended and unintended consequences.

3.3. Knowledge can be stored, managed and transferred

By assuming that there is a universal stock of knowledge that can be stored, managed and transferred, knowledge that is not or cannot be codified and translated into symbolic representations is neglected. This includes types of indigenous knowledge that are not transcribed but passed on through generations orally, for example through fables, songs or plays (Field 2004). Knowledge that is local in character and deeply implicated in people's lives can not, by its very nature, be conserved and archived (Agarwal 1995).

Polanyi (1967) distinguishes between codified and tacit knowledge, whereby tacit knowledge refers to human knowledge that is not easily documented or transmitted as information. Van der Velden (2002) suggests that assuming knowledge can be documented and transferred confuses the concept of knowledge with information. Brown and Duguid (2002:119) explicate this by

distinguishing knowledge from information because it entails a knower. The acquisition of knowledge is a human process of thinking, awareness, understanding, and changing consciousness. Information, on the other hand, is more or less independent of people and therefore easier to transfer because it is not influenced by context. Not distinguishing between knowledge and information, or confusing them, can obscure important considerations, for example the interests and values of people producing or providing the knowledge, and the difference between the process of learning to acquire knowledge and of disseminating and obtaining information (Van der Velden 2002).

Given this distinction between information and knowledge, it is also possible to differentiate between information and knowledge intermediaries. Whilst information intermediaries are concerned with generating, filtering, editing and transmitting information, knowledge intermediaries interact with the end-users in order to ensure a process of understanding which is achieved through learning. The actions of intermediaries can be positioned along a continuum from information dissemination to knowledge creation. Intermediaries can move along this spectrum depending on the need of their audience, and the most appropriate way of addressing this need. Both functions are essential for effective communication and are complementary rather than at odds with each other.

3.4. Communication is a linear process

The modernist paradigm views communication in development as a top-down process of information dissemination with the intention of transforming individual's behaviour and societies from 'traditional' to 'modern'. Models of communication are based on conjectures that development is externally induced and new technologies and ideas are transferred from experts in the North to passive receivers. The participatory approach challenges this top-down view of development. It is based on the notion that people are their own drivers of development: they hold a greater knowledge of themselves and their environments than experts, and are therefore better equipped to identify their own problems and find ways to solve them.

The participatory model of communication draws on the work of Paulo Freire (1970) who views communication not as information transmission, but as a two-way process of learning. Freire criticises the banking model of education whereby teachers impart knowledge to students, suggesting instead that, through dialogue and critical reasoning, the student and teacher are co-investigators of the world. This interpretation challenges the positivist view that separates knowledge from human activity.

Despite this challenge, the participatory approach to communication is not directly opposed to dissemination techniques, with a number of qualifications. Firstly, it is only applicable to community level situations and can not be realistically applied at national or international levels. Secondly, if taken out of context it can underplay the importance of dissemination methods that are used to promote development. Friere himself observed that teachers, facilitators and outsiders are important for introducing new skills and ideas to oppressed communities. Thus, rather than the relationship between dissemination and dialogue being dichotomous, the methods of communication are intertwined and reinforce each other (Singhal 2005).

With the participatory approach to communication, intermediaries' functions in development are altered. The notion that experts' views of development processes are correct is challenged, and the idea that knowledge is socially constructed and there are multiple perspectives of the world is reinforced. The participatory approach also highlights the importance of cyclical processes of communication for knowledge sharing and creation. The knowledge intermediary's role would be to share information by interacting directly with users, and to create new knowledge through a process of joint learning. As such, intermediaries are not dealing with a fixed, transferable object, but an evolving and dynamic process.

4. Discussion

Through the above analysis it has been shown that knowledge is socially constructed, and that there are multiple realities. Whose reality and what knowledge is regarded as legitimate are determined by epistemological, methodological and power hierarchies which combine and sideline alternative perspectives. It is not possible to objectively 'discover' knowledge because the interests and worldviews of actors involved in processes of investigation influence outcomes. By accepting that knowledge is socially constructed and linked to values, beliefs, cultural practices and experience, the potential for transferring knowledge without reinterpretation is greatly reduced (Pretty and Chambers 1993).

Within this context, the role of intermediaries is subject to reinterpretation. Rather than being considered as neutral systems of communication, intermediaries are recognised as political agents who reflect on and are conscious of their actions. An intermediary's role is further determined by the needs and demands of the audience, and by the requirements of funders and the institutions in which they are embedded. The analysis suggests that there are multiple functions that intermediaries may undertake beyond disseminating information. The following discussion focuses on some of these different roles for intermediaries, including providing a platform for multiple perspectives, advocacy, facilitating interaction and stimulating discussion, and assisting in processes of mutual learning.

4.1. A platform for multiple perspectives

In accepting that there are multiple views of the world, intermediaries can provide a space for, and make accessible, research that reflects the diversity of interests and ideologies of different individuals, particularly those who are normally sidelined by dominant discourses. Roling (1994:129) describes this as 'making things visible' and presenting fresh perspectives. To do this, intermediaries must be aware of and address the different factors that contribute to knowledge hierarchies which subjugate some viewpoints. For instance, epistemological and methodological hierarchies can be overcome when intermediaries disseminate information that is not necessarily scientifically proven, or research that derives from alternative methods of enquiry including indigenous knowledge or action research. This can have the effect of empowering individuals and communities as well as providing a richer information environment for innovation and research.

4.2. Advocacy role

Since intermediaries are political actors it is also possible that they can play an advocacy role and lobby for particular groups/issues. Techniques might include producing policy briefs or information packs that reflect their point of view. Intermediaries can also adopt specific communication techniques to ensure that information is tailored and presented in formats that are most likely to reach and influence their target audience. In this way, intermediaries' actions are driven by their own views and beliefs as well as by the expressed needs of a particular group.

4.3. Facilitating interaction and stimulating dialogue

Intermediaries can function as initiators of discussion, for example by creating networks and discussion forums, or by holding conferences and generating exchange visits. The intermediary role in this way transcends simply making interventions to deliver messages, and operates to ensure that there is dialogue between different parties. In particular, intermediaries can help to facilitate communication between researchers and policymakers. There has been extensive debate about the perceived communication gap between the two groups, which has contributed to the limited impact of research on policy (Neilson, 2001). Whist pathways of influence are difficult to pinpoint, evidence suggests that direct forms of communication are more effective ways to influence policy than dissemination techniques (Hanney, 2003).

Intermediaries can also create spaces for engagement between decision-makers and the people who are directly affected by policies. It is important to provide channels for vulnerable and marginalised groups to voice their views because they are the groups most affected by development decisions and are in a better position to identify their own needs. Combining their knowledge with the knowledge of people in development institutions and decision-makers makes it more likely that policies will be effective and implemented successfully.

This role for intermediaries differs vastly from the role conceived of within the modernist paradigm, which would involve passing on experts' knowledge. In this alternative perspective, there are no experts with superior knowledge, rather participation from all stakeholders is encouraged and their different knowledge and experience is brought together. Intermediaries can facilitate this process, as they are perceived to be more neutral and trustworthy than those who are directly involved in decision making processes, and may be in a better position to bridge barriers between different groups.

4.4 Assisting in processes of mutual learning

This discussion has shown that development communication isn't necessarily limited to the transfer of information, but rather it can be a process of dialogue and learning to achieve understanding (Pretty and Chambers 1993). The intermediary, rather than operating to impart existing knowledge, engages in a process of mutual learning with the user of information, and through a process of dialogue, reflection, understanding and practice they co-construct new knowledge (van der Velden 2002).

Libraries provide an example of how the role of an intermediary alters through this alternative conceptual framework. The traditional conception of libraries - as depositaries of objective and recorded knowledge - has been dominated by modernist views of knowledge. Libraries are considered to be 'temples of knowledge' and librarians are 'guardians of truth' (Hillenbrand 2005). This perspective is firmly rooted in modernist assumptions: that knowledge is neutral and can be differentiated from opinion (fiction vs. non fiction), and that it is expressed in words and preserved in manuscripts, books and articles. Furthermore, it is assumed that people visit libraries to search for and access information; their relationship with librarians is characterised in unequal terms as the process of communicating information involves the librarian imparting knowledge to the less informed recipient (Radford 1992).

This narrow understanding of knowledge and the role of libraries can be challenged when knowledge is understood as continuously constructed and reconstructed rather than discovered. As agents, library users have their own opinions and interpretations of texts, and it is with these in mind that they create their own understanding of reality. Similarly, according to Foucault's view of the library experience, 'the activity of conducting literature searches becomes the individual's attempt to locate his knowledge claims within an existing order of knowledge claims' (Radford 1992:419). Rather than imparting knowledge through discrete pieces of information, libraries function as places where new knowledge is created and recreated.

6. Conclusion

This paper illustrates how the perceived role of intermediaries in development is influenced by the paradigm through which they are viewed. Assessing intermediaries within modernist views of knowledge restricts their function to transferring information and ideas. Intermediaries are then considered to be neutral and the information they communicate must be objective and verified by empirical evidence.

An analysis of the challenges made to modernist views of knowledge has highlighted several important functions that intermediaries can undertake when they are considered outside this paradigm, including providing a platform for alternative voices, advocacy, facilitating discussion and assisting in processes of learning. One outcome of many of these intermediary functions is the empowerment of different individuals and groups by providing them with a space to voice their opinions/research and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.

Looking beyond modernist views of knowledge and communication has also made it possible to distinguish between information and knowledge intermediaries. The role of information intermediaries is to make available timely and relevant information, or to sort and select information to make it more relevant for the intended audience. Knowledge intermediaries, on the other hand, are concerned with how information is interpreted and used to create new knowledge. Particularly for knowledge intermediaries, the focus is on relationships with the users of their services as well as the content of information being communicated. Interaction with their users not only provides feedback to the services, but also enables them take part in and support a process of mutual learning. Regardless of their position along the spectrum of information dissemination and knowledge creation, intermediaries maintain a responsibility to be aware that their decisions and actions are political; they are agents, who are able to reflect upon knowledge hierarchies, recognise their own role in sustaining or deconstructing these hierarchies, and act accordingly.

References

Agarwal, A. (1995). "Dismantling the divide between Indigenous and scientific knowledge'." Development and Change **25**: 413-429.

Brown, J. and P. Duguid (2002). The Social Life of Information, Harvard Business School Press.

Chambers, R. (1997). Whose Reality Counts: Putting the First Last. London, Intermediate Technology Publications.

Charmaz, K. and R. Mitchell (1997). The Myth of Silent Authorship. Reflexivity and Voice. R. Hertz. London, Sage.

Cole, K. (1999). Economy - Environment - Development - Knowledge. London, Routledge.

Crewe, E. (1997). The Silent Traditions of Developing Cooks. Discourses of Development: Anthropological Perspectives. R. D. Grillo and R. L. Stirrat. Oxford, Berg.

Deane, J. (2006). Communication for Empowerment: Developing Media Strategies in Support of Vulnerable Groups. Democratic Governance Group, United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Development Policy.

Denzin, N. and Y. Lincoln (2000). Introduction: The Discipline and Practise of Qualitative Research. Handbook of Qualitative Research. N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Escobar, A. (1995). Encountering development: the making and unmaking of the Third World. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Fairhead, J. and M. Leach (1997). Webs of Power and the Construction of Environmental Policy Problems: Forest Loss in Guinea. Discourses of Development: Anthropological Perspectives. R. D. Grillo and R. L. Stirrat. Oxford, Berg.

Field, S. (2004). "Developing Dialogues: The Value of Oral History."

Finlay, L. (2002). "Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice." Qualitative Research **2**(2): 209-230.

Foucault, M. (1980). Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977. New York, Pantheon Books.

Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. London, Penguin.

Giddens, A. (1979). Central problems in social theory: action, structure and contradiction in social analysis. Basingstoke, Macmillan.

Hillenbrand, C. (2005). "Librarianship in the 21st century - crisis or transformation?" The Australian Library Journal.

Hoben (1998). The Role of Development Discourse in the Construction of Environmental Policy in Africa. Concepts and Metaphors: Ideologies, Narratives and Myths in Development Discourse. H. Marcussen and S. Arnfred. Roskilde, Roskilde University.

Institute of Development Studies (1994). "Knowledge is Power: The Use and Abuse of Information in Development." IDS Bulletin **25**(2).

Leach, M. and R. Mearns (1996). The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment. London, James Currey Publishers and Heinemann.

Leys, C. (1996). The rise and fall of development theory. London, James Currey Publishers.

Markus, M. (2001). "Toward a Theory of Knowledge Reuse: Types of Knowledge Reuse Situations and Factors in Reuse." Journal of Management Information Systems **18**(1): 57-94.

Mehta, L. (2001). "The World Bank and its Emerging Knowledge Empire." Human Organisation **60**(2): 189-196.

Melkote, S. R. and H. L. Steeves (2001). Communication for Development in the Third World: Theory and Practice for Empowerment. London, Sage Publications.

Menou, M. J. (1993). Measuring the Impact of Information on Development, IDRC.

Neilson, S. (2001) IDRC-Supported Research and its Influence on Public Policy: Knowledge Utilisation and Public Policy Processes, a Literature Review. Evaluation Unit, IDRC, Canada.

OneWorld International. (2003). Local Content Phase II: Catalysing the Creation and Exchange of Local Content. Open Knowledge Network Quarterly Report.

Polanyi, M. (1967). The Tacit Dimension. New York, Doubleday.

Preston, P. (2002). Development Theory: An Introduction. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers.

Pretty, J. and R. Chambers (1993). "Towards a Learning Paradigm: New Professionalism and Institutions for Agriculture." IDS Discussion Paper **335**.

Radford, G. (1992). "Positivism, Foucault, and the Fantasia of the Library: Conceptions of Knowledge and the Modern Library Experience." Library Quarterly **62**(4): 408-424.

Rogers, Everett M. (1962). Diffusion of Innovations. The Free Press, New York.

Röling, N. (1994). "Communication Support for Sustainable Natural Resource Management." IDS Bulletin **25**(2): 125-133.

Rostow, W. (1960). The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Samoff, J. and N. Stromquist (2001). "Managing Knowledge and Storing Wisdom? New Forms of Foreign Aid?" Development and Change **32**(4): 631-656.

Saywell, D. and A. Cotton (1999). <u>Spreading the Word: Practical Guidelines for Research Dissemination Strategies</u>. Loughborough, UK, WEDC.

Schech, S. (2002). "Wired for change: the links between ICTs and development discourses." <u>Journal of International Development</u> **14**(1): 13-23.

Schramm, W. (1967). Communication and Change. <u>Communication and Change in the Developing Countries</u>. D. Lerner and W. Schramm. Honolulu, East-West Centre Press.

Schwandt, T. (2002). Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Inquiry. <u>The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues</u>. N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. London, Sage Publications.

Scoones, I. and J. Thompson (1993). "Challenging the Populist Perspective: Rural People's Knowledge, Agricultural Research and Extension Practice." <u>IDS Discussion Paper</u> **332**.

Scoones, I. and J. Thompson (1994). <u>Beyond Farmer First: rural knowledge in agricultural research and extension practices</u>. London, Intermediate Technology Publications.

Singhal, A. (2005). "Dissemination vs. Dialogue: A False Dichotomy." <u>Mazi - The Communication for Social Change Report</u>(5).

Van der Veldan, M. (2002). "Knowledge facts, knowledge fiction: the role of ICTs in knowledge management for development." <u>Journal of International Development</u> **14**(1): 25-37.

Waisbord, S. (2001). "Family Tree of Theories, Methodologies and Strategies in Development Communication." Rockefeller Foundation.

WorldBank (1998). "Knowledge for Development" World Development Report 1998/99. Washington, The World Bank, Washington.

Yankah, K. (1999). "African Folk and the Challenges of the Global Lore." <u>Africa Today</u> **19**(2): 6-8.