The combination of Educommunication and community media as a development communication strategy

A case study of the Centre of Community Media São Miguel on air in São Paulo city, Brazil

(Núcleo de Comunicação Comunitária São Miguel no Ar)

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Abstract
The aim of this study is to introduce and analyze the case of the Núcleo de Comunicação Comunitária São Miguel no Ar (Centre of Community Media Sao Miguel on the air, freely translated), known by its acronym NCC, in order to discuss in what ways an educommunication project can contribute to local development and social change, and might be acknowledge as a Communication for Development strategy. The general research question is: in what ways can an educommunication project enhance social participation and contribute to local development? What are the main features of NCC projects in regard to social participation and local development that might characterize it as a Communication for Development strategy? The general aim of this study is to bridge Educommunication and Communication for Development.

Key words: communication for development; educommunication; media education; community media; youth; Brazil.
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I. Introduction

The present study is intended to explore the process and outcomes of an educommunication project implemented in Sao Paulo city (Brazil), from a Communication for Development perspective. Founded in 2007, the Núcleo de Comunicação Comunitária São Miguel no ar (freely translated as Centre of Community Media Sao Miguel on the air), known by its acronym NCC, is coordinated by a private nonprofit foundation named Fundação Tide Setubal, supported financially by a family funds management.

The projects take place in one of the poorest neighborhood of Sao Paulo city, called Sao Miguel Paulista. The aim of the centre is to promote local development throughout the empowerment of local people to enhance citizen participation (to be conceptualized and problematized in the analysis), in order to building the community capacity of striving for better life standards. The target groups of NCC are mainly formed by adolescents and young people, residents of the local community. Throughout its activities, the organization pursues to enhance the local young people level of agency. Thus, youth are considered its main agents of actions, but the organization also involves families and professionals of schools, such as professors, coordinators, principals.

NCC utilizes the strategy of Educommunication and community media in an effort to achieve social change and local development within the communities of Sao Miguel Paulista. Educommunication has been widely applied in Brazil as a strategy of social and informal learning in order to build children and youth capacity on critical view of media, besides enhancing their schooling, reading and writing, and civic awareness and engagement. On the other hand, media education also enables youth to become producer of culture and information, stimulating them to have their voice heard in their own ways. Briefly, one may understand Educommunication as a practice based on theoretical framework aimed at teaching (mainly adolescents and youth) about the full range of media – video, radio, recorded music, print, and digital communication technologies – in order to develop their critical and active participation as consumers and producers of media content.

a) Thesis structure

The present thesis is structured in chapters as following. First, after the introduction, I give the background of this study, emphasizing that my initial purpose was to filling a
gap between Educommunication initiatives in Brazil and the broad field of Development Communication.

The second chapter is aimed to present briefly the social economic context that shapes Brazilian society nowadays, notably in regard to the urban largest cities such as São Paulo, in order to the reader better understand the challenges which has been addressed by the projects focused here and the environment in which they operate. Following subsections of this chapter are dedicated to present the projects run by the Centre of Community Media São Miguel on Air (NCC), as well as its organizational structure, NCC Community media outlets, and its mode of working.

The research questions are presented in chapter three.

In chapter four the methods applied in this study are described, along with the reasons behind the choice of these methods. In the sub-section of this chapter I present the process of fieldwork, which means when and how the fieldwork was conducted.

I introduce the theoretical framework and key concepts in chapter five; and in the light of this I argue for the relevance of the study in the following chapter (six).

The findings interwoven with the analysis are placed in chapter seven. I have divided this chapter into sections based on the features of development communication I intend to highlight in this study – youth empowerment and engagement, participatory communication, community media, and educommunication.

I finalize the thesis with the main conclusions and reflections on further studies in chapter eight.

Finally, I close the thesis with the literature references and appendices with the field notes in full, interview guide and some photos of NCC projects and fieldwork process.

b) Background

The background for this study is twofold – personal and academic. The personal reason is due to my professional experience and interests that have influenced and motivated me to study the field of Educommunication. The academic motivation is due to a lack that I have identified between Educommunication and Communication for Development that I want to fill and consequently to contribute to both fields.

Due to my professional experience, I have become familiar to a wide range of projects aimed at improving education for adolescents and youth living in vulnerable and impoverished contexts in Brazil. Thus, alongside the projects applied in formal
schooling, I was presented to others focused on social and non-formal learning for children, adolescents and youth run by NGOs.

As a communication practitioner, among these projects I have become particularly interested in those which combine communication and education, or in other words, that uses communication as a mean for educate young people in issues of civic education, and a critical view on mass media. Moreover, these projects also aimed at teaching young people to produce their own media, allowing them to have their voice heard, using digital devices as mobile phones and digital cameras to produce audiovisual products, blogging, newspapers, and radio programming.

Then, I learned that these projects are placed within the theoretical framework (and practices) named Educommunication, and that there are plenty of these initiatives run by grassroots organizations in Brazil and Latin America. I was amazed to see how the young people who take part in these projects have developed social and educational skills, for example, they learned how to better express themselves, and develop a critical view on social issues. Moreover, these adolescents and young people also have improved their learning in formal schooling such as in literacy and other formal disciplines, as well as they have become more engaged in their community.

Although, some Educommunication projects take place inside the schools as interdisciplinary educational projects, most of them are implemented and run by NGOs outside schools in cultural or community centers, as an afterschool program. Several of these projects have been awarded due to its outstanding outcomes in improving teens and youth skills. There is a national network joining the ten most awarded and recognized Brazilian NGOs focused on Educommunication named Rede CEP (Communication, Education and Participation), \(^1\) which is supported by UNICEF among others. Its website presents the main concepts, and best practices of Educommunication. Now that I am about to conclude a Master course in Communication for Development, with the benefit of the hindsight acquired after two years studying the field, I can better understand that Educommunication might be regarded as an strategy, among many others, of development communication. Moreover, I do think Educommunication can be benefited from reflections and critical view nurtured within the wider field of Communication for development, mainly if it is

\(^1\) www.redecep.org.br
linked with other strategies, tools and approaches from the latter. I have identified a knowledge lack that I hope to contribute to fill with this study.

The NGO I am affiliated to coordinated a field trip to take a group of 20 young people to Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro on June 2012, in a ‘joint venture’ with the Centre of Community Media São Miguel (NCC). These youth were beneficiaries of projects of both organizations. On that occasion, I became pretty impressed by how articulated, social engaged, and confident these youth were. They stand out from others with the same underprivileged background. They even managed to interview the former Brazilian Senator for Environment, Marina Silva.

Hence, I started to follow closely the work of the Núcleo de Comunicação Comunitária São Miguel no ar (Centre of Community Media Sao Miguel on air). What most raised my interest was the mode they combine Educommunication with community media. Thus, I have decided to study them in order to better understand the constraints, achievements and opportunities of such an Educommunication project under the lens of Communication for Development, and in hoping to contribute to both fields.

II. Context of study

The Centre of Community Media Sao Miguel on air (Núcleo de Comunicação Comunitária São Miguel no ar), known by its acronym NCC, is located in the neighborhood of São Miguel Paulista, a district situated in the outskirts of São Paulo city, around 1.5 hour from downtown by public transportation. It is an area of 24.6 km² with approximately 400,000 residents.

Although Brazilian social landscape has improved enormously over the last decade, Brazil is still one of the most unequal countries in the world, with a huge gap between the richest and the poorest stratum. Recently, this gap has been diminishing mostly due to welfare policy and social programmes started by President Lula in his two mandates (2003 to 2011), and his successor, and also due to economic stability, and overall prosperity. The social policies of the current and previous governments have been credited with lifting 28 million people out of extreme poverty and allowing 36 million to enter the middle class, in a country of 190.7 million. However, social

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2 The Gini Coefficient (also known as Gini Index) measures the inequality among values of a frequency distribution (for example levels of income). According to Gini Index Brazil is on 17th position, whereas Sweden is in 136 position, which means low inequality. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html on May 19, 2013.
inequality and social unsafe living conditions persist, mostly in urban conglomerates of developing countries, such as São Paulo city, one of the largest cities in the world.

São Miguel Paulista presents several social figures which confirm its social vulnerability such as the unemployment rate of young people (16-29 years old) which is sixteen percent. In addition, almost fifteen per cent of the households do not have access to public sewer services; approximately eleven per cent of the households are located in slums; data shows an average of 260 out of 100,000 children were hospitalized due to domestic violence\(^3\); There is no movie theater, museums, theater or concerts hall (out of 305 within the entire city) in this neighborhood. Regarding education, more than four per cent of its adult population are illiterate, almost nine per cent of adolescents drop out secondary school and 1.63\% of children drop out elementary school. The average income is US$ 500 per person.\(^4\) The majority of its population is from north and northeast of Brazil, the poorest regions. These migrants came to São Miguel Paulista mostly during the 1980’s and 1990’s. Thus, the youth residents are the second generation, who were born in São Paulo.

These, among other aspects, explain why this neighborhood is considered isolated from cultural and social public services provided by the municipality in other more central areas. In addition, its distance from downtown and lack of efficient public transportation are factors of its special segregation. Besides these social statistics, which are worse than the average of the municipality, the extreme end of São Miguel Paulista has been regularly affected by floods in the rain season, wherein many local people are displaced, trapped or lose their goods as furniture, food and clothing.

Hence, in order to contribute to the empowering of the community and to building their capacity to improve their living standards, Foundation Tide Setubal has started its activities in São Miguel Paulista. Initially, the organization is focused on training young people with communicative skills throughout the use of new technologies (ICTs) and motivating them to share their communicative productions in several forums within the public sphere. In order to analyze NCC practices at promoting participation in the public sphere, I am going to draw on the concept of Jürgen Habermas, to whom public sphere is “the social space generated in communicative action” as defined by Jurgen Habermas (Habermas, 1996, quoted by Rennie, 2006, p. 34).

\(^3\) Latest data available referring to 2007. The average of the municipality was 146.85 out of 100,000.

In order to assure youth participation, a participative methodology has been employed (that is to be explored in the analysis) in workshops and meetings, which is going to be addressed further in this study. The workshops and meetings with young people combined knowledge and practices in technology, language (oral, written and reading), citizenship, culture, community participation, and labor issues. In the analysis of NCC practices on educating youth for citizenship, it will be employed the sense of citizenship formulated by Jacob Srampickal (2006, p. 19) highlights, drawn on Rodriguez (2001) and Mouffe (1992) “citizenship is not primarily a legal status but a form of expression of identity, something to be constructed and reconstructed. Citizens have to enact their citizenship on a day-to-day basis by their participation in everyday political practices.

a) Overview of Centre of Community Media Sao Miguel on Air (NCC)

The Project São Miguel no Ar (Sao Miguel on air, freely translated) was founded in 2007, as an initiative of Fundação Tide Setubal (a nonprofit family foundation) in partnership with the Secretaria Municipal de Desenvolvimento Econômico e do Trabalho – SMADS (Department of Labor and Economic Development of Sao Paulo City, freely translated), and Instituto Votorantim (a corporate foundation). The aim was to provide young people with access to technological tools to produce community communication. The project began in Jardim Lapenna, a district of Sao Miguel Paulista (a peripheral neighborhood of Sao Paulo city), and afterwards was widespread to other districts of the neighborhood.

Initially named Sao Miguel no ar (Sao Miguel in the air), after three years, the partners SMADS and Instituto Votorantim left the partnership, and the project became Núcleo de Comunicação Comunitária – NCC (Centre of Community Communication), since then funded and coordinated solely by Fundação Tide Setubal.

The Fundação Tide Setubal continued the initial purpose of the project of assuring the rights to communication and information of the community, in order to enhance human development, moving the youth to look to the city, and strengthening their sense of belonging to the community. After this shift, the young people became more involved with the media production of community issues and thus could better contribute with other activities towards local development. (Adeve et al, 2012, p. 11)

b) Projects run by NCC
The first step was the creation of a print community newspaper named A Voz do Lapenna (The voice of Lapenna), the title makes reference to the name of the district. To produce the newspaper, the young people had to research and learn about the contents, and were taught how to write, pasting-up, lay outing, interviewing, and all about media production. However, as pointed out in the project brochure the most valuable of the work was learning how to make everything in a collective mode, with the active participation of the community residents. (Adeve et al, 2012, p. 12)

Young people engagement has risen along with the community involvement. After a while, another media channels were created – blogs, and street radio and television. From 2007 up to present 15 issues of print paper with a circulation of 5,000 each were produced, 16 street radio and television programming and more than 400 posts on the blogs (more than 15,000 visitors). It is emphasized that the main aim of all this is to give voice to the community. (Adeve et al, 2012, p. 12)

The second step came from the interest and engagement of the local young people in the NCC community media activities which has naturally evolved and unfolded into a new project involving local public schools named Jovem Comunica (freely translated as Youth speak up). This project was created in 2009 aimed at involving teachers and students in the production of comics, leaflets, written texts, radio programmes and audiovisuals within school environment for forging an communicative ambience that enhance educational action.

In 2011 the project Jovem Comunica (Youth speak up) was implemented in six elementary public schools of Sao Miguel Paulista involving around 560 teenagers (aged 12 to 18). In each school was implemented a radio show produced by the students with support of teachers, and guidance of NCC. Students were motivated to bring to school their mobile phones, digital cameras and other technological devices and use them to support the learning of curriculum disciplines such as Portuguese, Geography and Mathematic. In addition, in their media production, the students also approach social topics as Education and sustainability and civic issues such as Rio+20 and the recent local elections for Mayor in Sao Paulo city. The students produce community radio and television programmes, blogs, news reportage to the A Voz de Lapenna community newspaper.

5 Brazilian Children’s Law (Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente – ECA, 1990) considers ‘children’ from 0 to 11 years old, and ‘adolescents’ from 12 to 14 years old. However, Brazilian Youth Secretariat (Federal government) considers ‘youngster’ citizens of ages 15 to 29. Thus, generally, in order to include those aged 15 to 18, we use to refer to the population aged 12 to twenties as ‘young people’.
Employing informal learning strategies, NCC organizes workshops with students and teachers in which social and educational themes are approached and discussed, such as citizenship, young people concerns, education, and city and community issues. Afterwards, they are stimulated to produce media contents with the outcomes of these workshops and deliver it throughout the community media outlets – community newspaper, street television, and street radio (see below).

A program similar to an internship was created in 2012 in which 10 youngsters aged 16 to 20 have been trained in the practices of community and alternative media and journalism, and mobilization among others in a strategy of DIY (DoItYourself), employing ICTs devices such as mobile phones, and digital cameras. In this project, named **Intermídia (Intermedia)**, these young people also learn how to mobilize the community regarding its concerns and how to engage in civic issues. With the guidance of NCC core team, they organize public forums in which local people may debate their concerns, they follow and cover political and cultural questions relevant to the city and their community, and they produce media contents to be broadcast via NCC community media outlets. Videos, podcasts, educational materials, and news are among their media production.

José Luiz Adeve, NCC coordinator, emphasizes that within all those communicative activities is implicit an encouragement to the dialogue, debate, and collective collaboration in public spaces, be it physical or virtual, towards to building a critical thought on social issues within the community. Thus, in addition to the promotion of the use of ICTs as a tool for improving learning, the project also aims to enhance the liaison between schools and the surrounding community, and enhance youth engagement in community issues. (Adeve et al, 2012, p. 14)

c) **Organizational structure of NCC**

NCC team is formed by three paid employees and two volunteers. The coordinator is 55 and has a degree in audiovisual; his assistant is a 29 years old journalist, and a communication technician of 20, an undergraduate student of Advertising. One volunteer is a doctorate student in Communications and the other is an undergraduate student of Sociology. The latter gives the youngsters of Intermedia project weekly workshops on subjects of sociology, as her mandatory internship. The former is doing her doctoral thesis on the community paper ‘A Voz do Lapenna’.
In addition, there is a group of 10 trainees who take part of the Intermedia project. These youngsters are given training from the NCC staff on producing media content, and work as producers of NCC community media products and with mobilization of local community. Aged 16-20, these youngsters are from social vulnerable backgrounds and residents of the local neighborhood. They have finished high school and earn a scholarship of around US$ 400 from the government (Department of Labor and Economic Development of Sao Paulo City). They work full time, 40 hours/week, and the duration of the internship contract is one year, with possibility to be extended for a second year.

NCC staff develops practices of Educommunication and Community Media with the above mentioned 10 youngsters of Intermédia project and 120 adolescents of Jovem Comunica project which are all students of 55 elementary public schools. Also schools teachers and NGOs educators take part in the training in Educommunication developed by NCC to replicate it in their educational processes.

d) NCC Community Media Outlets

In addition to blogging, NCC produces the following community media outlets (see pictures in appendices):

**Street television** - community broadcaster in which pre-recorded and live images are projected in a wall in a public space in the community such as a square.

**Street radio** – A mobile radio studio is set up in an open market in the midst of fruits, vegetables and fishes stands. During the live programming, community reporters interview local people, and special guests (authorities, professors, and specialists) to talk about social issues that affect the community.

**Community newspaper** – *A Voz de Lapenna* (The voice of Lapenna) is a bimonthly 12 paged tabloid format with a circulation of 5,000.
Thus, the range of NCC activities draw upon two communication strategies combined in a unique mode – Educommunication and Community Media.

There are four crucial and influential concepts for NCC – participation, empowerment, territory and literacy.

According to NCC, “participation is the soul of community communication. In this context, the whole production is non-profit making by the community and for the community. The collective authorship assures the meet of a fundamental principle of this work: an exclusive broadcast of topics of local interest. Empowerment refers to the process in which someone is attributed of power to making decisions. Within the social context, empowering regards the possibility of one person, family or community to take a proactive attitude in relation to its own destiny, in a way that s/he are able to make the changes s/he believes is important to achieve better life conditions. Territory is a live space, shaped by its natural, human and institutional resources that make it alive. In this sense the term is applied to designate a given geographical space and all the relationships established in there.” (Adeve et al, 2012, p. 20-22, my translation)

Literacy for NCC is beyond to know how to writing and reading, it means one use her/his skills of reading and writing to attain one’s objectives. Literacy has to do with the social practices and uses of reading and writing in people’s daily lives.
III. Research questions

The general research question for this study is: *in what ways can an educommunication project enhance social participation and contribute to local development?*

In order to simplify and guide the focus of this study, the general question posed above may be broke down into the following minor question: *What are the main features of NCC projects in regard to social participation and local development that might characterize it as a Communication for Development strategy?*

My initial assumption is that a project in which the Educommunication methodology is applied has the potential to engage and empower youth and communities, and to promote participation and social change, especially when it is combined with community media. Given that community media is produced by the community based on its interests, culture, struggles and so on, I think that it facilitates the process of collective identity construction and promotes citizen participation. Thus, an Educommunication project may be regarded as a Communication for Development strategy and a tool for social change.

I suggest here that NCC practices draw on theoretical frameworks within Communication for Development, and have some features in common with Social and non-formal learning, entertainment-education, and community media. It is not ‘only’ about teaching young people to have a critical view on the media and training them to produce their own media through which they can express their viewpoints. It is about to stimulate them to became involved with their community issues, mobilizing local people throughout participatory communication (to be explored and problematized in the analysis), and consequently empowering the whole community. This is what the organization claims to be their purposes.

Hence, the purpose of this study is to introduce and analyze the case of the Centre of Community Media Sao Miguel on the air (NCC), in order to discuss in what ways an educommunication project can contribute to local development and participation, and might be acknowledge as a Communication for Development strategy. To do so, it is intended to explore two main aspects of NCC practices - the participatory communication and youth agency methods in order to apprehend its outreach, outcomes and effectiveness and verify if it might be, *de facto*, considered a strategy of communication for social change. Moreover, combining Educommunication and a Community Media strategy with specific features shaped by the resources locally
available, the NCC model may be a viable strategy applicable in local community development elsewhere, especially contexts with limited resources.

IV. Research methodology

The core activities of the Centre of Community Media Sao Miguel on the air) is the production of news by local young people to be broadcast via their community media outlets and to promote local people mobilization to achieve social changes. In order to build capacity for producing media, Educommunication methodology is employed. The channels employed to broadcast the content produced are alternative/community media such as community paper, street radio and television, and blogging. On the other hand, they have a focus on social mobilization in the form of community-based forums with local residents, and advocacy via different interventions.

In order to better apprehend and to analyze the outcomes of NCC work it seemed appropriate to employ a combination of research methods that investigate cultural production, civic engagement, youth empowerment, mobilization and participatory communication.

It is crucial for this work to understand the practices, cognitive processes and social interactions of the young people involved in the project in producing information and culture, along with the participation process involving local community. Thus, for the purpose of this study, an ethnographic approach was applied to investigate the production and consumption of culture and information, and the (re) construction of identities within the ‘beneficiaries’ of NCC projects, employing interviewing and participant observation. Complementary, to collect secondary data I have carried out desk research on institutional documents and brochures of NCC.

Specifically, to collect primary data I have carried out semi-structured qualitative interviews with NCC staff and focus groups within the youngsters who take part of NCC projects. In addition, I have conducted participant observation to understand the daily activities of NCC, and what/how young participants learn and produce as communication practitioners.

Combining both methods I intend to complement the findings. For instance participation observation allows the research to see how the process happens, in this case, how the Educommunication as an non formal educational strategy happens with their beneficiaries and how NCC manage to promote participation of the youth and local
people. Allowing in site observation, this method may provide the research with inside information that is not expressed by the informants, by purpose or instinctively.

On the other hand, interviewing allows the beneficiaries of the project and the NCC staff to express in their own words their opinions and feelings. The fieldwork showed that the choice of focus groups to the youth and semi-structured interview were positive, because young people seem to feel more comfortable in company of their peers. So they were more open to talk about their issues. Moreover, sometimes one kid did not know how to express an issue that was shared by others. So, if one had the initiative to speak up, the other would follow and complement. On the other hand, NCC staff was interviewed individually. The open-ended semi-structured interview was a good choice because as communicators they were very talkative, and the conversation flows easily, open up other threads and topics that I had not anticipated.

a) Fieldwork
The fieldwork, conducted during April/2013 and early days of May/2013, consisted of three sessions of participant observation of NCC activities, two sessions of focus group with the young participants of NCC projects, and three qualitative semi-structured interviews with NCC staff.

Participant observation
On the first session of participant observation (April 2, 2013), I observed a forum of local residents of Jardim Lapenna (the district in which NCC is located and operates). The forum is organized by NCC and aimed at engaging local community to gather, and collectively debate about local issues to find solutions. The youngsters from project Intermedia are in charge of mobilize local community to take part in it, and disseminate ideas on local development and social change.

The second session of participant observation was to follow closely one workshop with 8 teenagers (aged 14 to 16) participants of Project Jovem Comunica (Youth Speak Up) which takes place at public schools in the neighborhood. The educator/facilitator of NCC goes to public schools of the neighborhood of São Miguel to conduct workshops drawn on Educommunication methodology with students and a teacher that is the liaison of the project inside the school. This section was on April 9, 2013.

On May 2, 2013 I observed daily activities of the young people from project Intermedia in NCC office. In this occasion, they were producing communication outputs
to mobilize local community for the next forum of residents of Jardim Lapenna. In addition, the volunteer Juliana, undergraduate student of Sociology, conducted with them a workshop on genre issues. She aimed at raising genre awareness and deconstructing some genre stereotypes with them. This workshop was part of the training provided for the youngsters participants of Intermedia project.

Interviews

I have conducted three individual semi-structured interviews with NCC staff (interview guide is in Appendix). It is a very small team, formed by coordinator José Luiz Adeve (known by his nickname Cometa, the word in Portuguese for Comet), a 55 years old communication professional; his assistant, a 29 years old senior educator/facilitator named Andrelissa; and Katia, a junior educator/facilitator (formally referred as communication technician), who is aged 20.

It was particularly interesting interviewing Katia, an energetic and passionate young professional, because she is a former beneficiary/participant of NCC projects herself. Now she is part of the team and works as educator of the newcomer youngsters. They call themselves educators and facilitators of the learning process of the youngsters, employing Educommunication methodology and supporting the teens producing community media and media contents, with their technical expertise as communication practitioners.

The average duration of each interview is 1h20, and I have recorded all of the three sessions. The NCC staff was very open. They did not have an organized and structured discourse such as a Public Relations constructed discourse. They were natural and spontaneous. I think this is because NCC and Foundation Tide Setubal, the institution behind them, is a grassroots organization, working in a small scale.

Focus groups

I have carried out two focus groups session. The first one was with eight teenagers (aged 14 to 16) participants of Project Jovem Comunica (Youth Speak Up) on April 9, 2013. The second was with nine participants of Project Intermedia (aged 17 to 20).

At first, I got a little bit disappointed with the results of the discussion with the teenagers (the first group). At the beginning, they were very shy, and quiet. They gave monosyllabic answers. I knew that they could do more. Obviously there is no right and
wrong answers. I think for a researcher the most important is to obtain as much information as possible in order to have a rich raw material to work upon. For this reason I have become a little bit frustrated at the beginning of the focus group session with these adolescents. However, from the middle of the session onwards, they become more confident and open, and gave very interesting answers. Even so, we have to interpret these answers in relation to their tender age, for instance, some answers are very simplistic and lack elaboration and reflection, but I think this is natural for their age.

Later, I learned that there is a specific technique to interview children and adolescents, and maybe I should have researched on this beforehand. For instance, Professor LynNell Hancock at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism, is an expert in covering education, and has argued in favor of interviewing children when covering education. However, she stresses that there are some techniques to achieve the most in interviewing children. Although she refers to children as source for news stories focusing on journalism practice, I believe the same must apply to research practice in general. Hence if I had known that before, I would probably have conducted the focus group with the teenagers differently to obtain the most of them from the very beginning of the session. But, all in all, I have managed to elicit some valuable information from them about their experience and could highlight some excerpts from this debate that were very useful for this study.

On the other hand, the second group with those youngsters aged 17 to 20 was outstanding. It has been extremely difficult to select only the most significant answers, given it seemed that almost everything they said in the course of one hour session was fundamental to this study. I think this might be due three reasons: they really put hands on the community media practice; they are connected with a wider range of relationships within the NCC which enriches their experience; and given that they are more mature, they have managed to construct meanings about what they have learned and know better how to express them.

I have recorded both focus group sessions. Each session last about one hour. I went to their place, which means where they work (in the case of Intermedia) and a classroom in a school (case of Jovem Comunica). Thus, they were in their comfort zone.

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6 I have no written reference of that given I heard it in her talk in an workshop named Education and Media I attended in March 2012 promoted by Instituto Alfa e Beto in Sao Paulo, Brazil. More information on http://www.alfaebeto.org.br/297
which facilitates the conversation. The Intermedia youth were left alone with me. However, with the group of adolescents from Jovem Comunica Project, the NCC educator stayed at the classroom, which was a wise decision, given that they were very shy and quiet at the beginning. So, she would help them to talk.

I wrote down in my notes their names in the sequence they were seat, and took pictures of them. And I took notes of words or expressions that stand out in each talk. This facilitates the process of transcriptions and translating, as I could more easily identify who were talking. At the end, I had an immense rich and valuable material to work on the findings and analysis. It was very difficult to select some quotes, because most of them seemed interesting. Hence, I had to select just one or two, amongst others, that were most significant and representative, on one hand, and clear, on the other hand, given that the translation is also a challenge. All the interviews were conducted in Portuguese, the local language. Thus, being Portuguese my mother tongue and English my second language, I have translated the interviews myself and did my best to be faithful to what the informants meant in their responses.

V. **Theoretical Framework**

In this section, it is presented the main concepts and thread of thoughts which will be employed in this study. Following a general approach on Educommunication, are the sub-themes within the field of Development Communication that relates to the case study, which are: participatory communication, community media and youth engagement, which form a common ground for the research – fieldwork and analysis – drawn upon.

**Educommunication**

Educommunication is a concept and practice widely employed in Latin America contexts, particularly in Brazil, by non-governmental organizations seeking for social change and social development through combined strategies of social and informal learning, alternative/community media and youth agency. Recently in Brazil, it has been also deployed in formal educational systems as in public schools. The theoretical framework for Educommunication is in English largely referred to as Media Education or Media Literacy, and in the Spanish world as Educación para la Comunicación, Educación en Medios, and more recently Educomunicación. Its origin dates back in the 1980s, notably in Latin America, influenced by theory and practice of Popular
Education and dialogical communication developed mainly by Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator throughout some of his seminal works such as *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Ismar Soares, one of the leading Brazilian scholars in the field, points out that Educommunication is a complex and multidisciplinary concept, which relates to several meanings, and as a “new” field, scholars tend to state that there is not such a definite conceptualization of Educommunication. (Soares, 2011, my translation)

Soares, who is member of the Centre of Communication and Education (NCE) at University of Sao Paulo (USP), affirms that a research on Educommunication carried out on 12 countries in Latin America in 1990 has led to the concept of the field employed by the institution (NCE-USP), which is “educommunication is a set of actions to planning and implementation of practices in order to create and develop open and creative communicative ecosystems within educational spaces, in order to assure increasing possibilities of expression of the whole educational community.” (Soares, 2011, p. 34-36, my translation).

Although Soares is one of the most prominent scholar in Brazil dedicated to this field, this is not a dominant view, and a definite concept of Educommunication, given that Educommunication is still an evolving concept. Moreover, though scholars and practitioners may state there is a practice guided by the framework on Educommunication, it is also true that these practices may vary enormously according to the organization which is running the Educommunication project, interests of the beneficiaries (youth) and resources available.

As I have explained Educommunication in English literature is referred as Media Education, and it has been a field supported by UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. In January of 1982, UNESCO organized the International Symposium on Media Education, held in Grunwald (Germany) in which it was issued the UNESCO Declaration of Media Education, drawn upon the recognition of the media power and their increasing and significant impact and penetration throughout the world. It is stated in UNESCO Declaration that “the role of communication and media in the process of development should not be underestimated, nor the function of media as instruments for the citizens’ active participation in society. Political and educational systems need to recognize their obligations to promote in their citizens a critical understanding of the phenomena of communication” (UNESCO, 1982).
David Buckingham, draws upon the Grunwald Declaration, and highlights three key emphases of Media Education, as presented below. I quote them in full in order to contribute for a better understanding the concept, theoretical framework and practice.

1. Media Education is concerned with the full range of media, including moving image media (film, television, video), radio and recorded music, print media (particularly newspapers and magazines), and the new digital communication technologies. It aims to develop a broad-based ‘literacy’, not just in relation to print, but also in the symbolic systems of images and sounds.

2. Media Education is concerned with teaching and learning about the media. This should not be confused with teaching through the media – for example, the use of television or computers as a means of teaching science, or history. Media Education is not about the instrumental use of media as ‘teaching aids’: it should not be confused with educational technology or educational media.

3. Media Education aims to develop both critical understanding and active participation. It enables young people to interpret and make informed judgments as consumers of media; but it also enables them to become producers of media in their own right, and thereby to become more powerful participants in society. Media Education is about developing young people’s critical and creative abilities. (Buckingham, 2001, p. 2)

It is the latter aspect of Media Education emphasized by Buckingham which shapes and influences the majority of educommunication projects run by NGOs and in some public schools systems in Brazil. The main objectives of such projects are to provide a critical understanding of media by youth, and training for them to produce media content and media outlets in their own way. The ultimate goal is to enhance children and youth participation.

Although Educommunication has some similarities with Entertainment-Education, such as messaging for diffusion on social issues, it also has particularities that are worth exploring. For instance, Educommunication primarily focuses on, training young people to produce media contents and often employs alternative/community media as outlets of this production, while Edutainment uses mass media channels and social marketing strategies.

Thus, the theoretical backbone of NCC practices is in my view Educommunication and Community Media. Given that Community Media has been approached within development communication field for long time, it has a relevant
theoretical frame to be based upon in this work. However, this project also relates to the field of Educommunication (or Media Education), whose framework also must be employed in the discussion. In addition, the theoretical framework of Communication for Development as a whole shall be explored, particularly participatory communication approaches, for a sustained reflection on the place Educommunication might have in the field.

Thus, along with the literature on Educommunication (or Media Education), the theoretical framework of participatory communication, community media, and a consideration for youth agency issues within development will contribute to better align the research questions with the main concerns of the fields, understanding the challenges, constraints and contributions of these approaches to Development Communication. Also, the selection of the theoretical framework mentioned aim at supporting a critical research analysis for a work with social relevance.

**Communication for Development**

Nora Quebral (2006), one of the pioneers in the field, quoted by Srampickal (2006) in his article *Development and Participatory Communication*, states that “development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfillment of the human potential.” (Srampickal, 2006, p. 3)

Development communication was incepted within the agricultural field in order to improve the lives of rural population. Afterwards, it has become wider employed in social development as a whole. As Srampickal (2006) points out “an attempt at informing, creating awareness, educating, and enlightening the people so that they can better their lives in every way, development communication includes participatory action for learning and sharing of powers: social (human rights and the emergence of the civil society), economic (egalitarian society) and political (democratization), within specific cultural contexts.” (Srampickal, 2006, p. 3)

Mass media faces several criticisms among development scholars and skepticism in general due to its global conglomerates, its linkage with elite power and interests and so on (Castells, 2009, among others), even though, some practitioners and scholars aligned with modernization theory do believe that mass media can play an important
role on development as information sources about development and can be used as educational tools as well.

However, participatory communication is better regarded within the development field by critics of both modernization and dependency approach, mainly due to its two way flow of information and dialogue, which is more coherent with the changes from ‘bottom-up’ (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005, p. 93) which scholars and practitioners aligned with the ‘new development’ or ‘third way’ of development consider more effective, lasting, and moreover it meets people’s need. The latter scholarship is based on the assumption that non-formal education rooted in the culture of the people using various indigenous media like popular theater and other cultural programs can help to create a civil consciousness and subsequent desire for development. (Srampickal, 2006, p. 4)

**Participatory communication**

Participatory communication in development as research and practice approach emerged in opposition to the diffusion model, characterized by its top-down, vertical, one-way, sender to receiver messaging.

As Srampickal (2006, p. 5) points out, development communication focused on indigenous knowledge, participation and empowerment was build on the work begun in South America in the 1970s by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educational theorist. Initially focusing on adult education, Freire suggested a model where education becomes a dialogue in which the teacher and student learn from each other. The process of learning to read and write can also be a process of analyzing reality and of becoming critically aware of one’s situation and be able to change attitudes. Freire called this process as conscientization or consciousness rising. (Freire, 1970)

[The participatory model] stresses the importance of cultural identity of local communities and of democratization and participation at all levels – international, national, local and individual. It points to a strategy, not merely inclusive of, but largely emanating from the traditional ‘receivers’. (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005)

Servaes & Malikhao (2005) states that there are two major approaches to participatory communication – the dialogical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and the one articulated by Unesco in the 1970s which implies access, participation and self-management. While the theory of dialogical participation is based on group dialogue rather than such amplifying media as radio, print and television, the Unesco approach
can be linked with community media, in the sense that this latter allows access, participation of the public and self-management. These authors quoted Berrigan (1979) when he states that “community media are media to which members of the community have access, for information, education, entertainment, when they want access. They are media in which the community participates, as planners, producers, and performers. They are the means of expression of the community, rather than for the community.” Finally, they emphasize that both the production and reception approaches of ‘access’ can be considered relevant for an understanding of ‘community media’.

**Community media**

Some authors call it *community media*, others use the term *alternative media* (for instance Chris Atton, 2002) or *citizens’ media* (Rodriguez, 2001), *radical media* (John Downing, 2001) or even *small media* is found in some works (Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1994). In my view, community media can be understood as an “umbrella” concept which embraces the others. Although some scholars have pointed some particularities that distinguish those terms, there are others who use them is similar sense. Thus, in emphasizing the commonalities among these three terms, I rather use them in the same sense.

Yet a leading author on the theme, Ellie Rennie (2006, p. 16) states that community media has received little scholarly attention, in my viewpoint there is a relatively abundant literature about it, though, perhaps more focused on the practices than the theoretical frameworks. For instance, local community driven media projects already have a long history within communication for development, starting with community radio projects such as the 1940’s Bolivian miner’s radio stations (see more on this case in Gumucio-Dagron in Hemer and Tufte (2005)).

Bolivian miners’ radio was pointed as an example of democratic community media by New World Information and Communication Order commission organized by UNESCO in 1976. One may credited to this debate proposed by UNESCO the historical origin of community media as a field of interest to academics and development and communication practitioners. “Community media studies first emerged out of efforts to “democratize” the media. It was a challenge to the domination of the corporate media and the economic and political media structures that favored some interests over others. (…) Alternative media initiatives (both broadcast and print) were said to destabilize the one-to-many communication structures of the mass media through their participatory,
two-way structure. *Passive* audience member could be transformed into *active* producers.” (Rennie, 2006, p. 17-18)

Thus, from the community radios, through Independent Media Center (IMC) incepted in the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle in 1999 by alternative media activists to cover manifests that were not covered by the mainstream media, and the community access television, there is a wide range of practices which can be considered community media with a variety of concepts and theoretical frameworks. Rennie (2006) underscores that community media is generally defined as media that allows for access and participation, emphasizing its nonprofit status and representativeness of a particular group. However, as Rennie puts it “the term ‘community media’ in its widest sense, includes a massive array of activities and outcomes, not all of which are small or nonprofit, such as the gay press and fan websites, which identify themselves as community media. (2006, p. 22)

Hence, in order to narrow the framework in the present study, I drawn upon the concept of community media stated by Kevin Howley (2005) that is “grassroots or locally oriented media access initiatives predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content, dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, and committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity.”

The concept of community media that is employed in the present case study could be summarized as “local, participatory media and small scale media”.

Although community media are relatively widely employed in diasporic cultures, mainly with the new technologies devices and the internet, for the construction of ethnic, and cultural identities across time and space, in the present study, this study will analyze the use of community media, or participatory media, in facilitating the process of collective identity construction in geographically defined communities, not in a context of diaspora.

Based on Dorothy Kidd, Howley simply puts that alternative media is “of, by, and for” people living in a specific place. He concludes quoting Kidd that “alternative media grow, like native plants, in the communities that they serve, allowing spaces to generate historical memories and analyses, nurture vision for their future, and weed out the representations of dominant media. They do this through a wide combination of genres, from news, storytelling, conversation and debate to music in local vernaculars.” (Howley, 2005, p. 5-6)
It is important herein to underscore the close relationship between community media and citizenry. “Community and alternative media can be seen as an articulation of citizenship when citizenship is seen as the day-to-day endeavor to renegotiate and construct new levels of democracy and equality.” (Rennie, 2006, p. 21) And she concludes that community media, being a media that is produced by civil society groups, has a unique relationship to the types of citizen participation that occur through civil society engagement.

Thus, in opening space, facilitating and promoting civil society engagement, community media strengthens citizen participation in the public sphere, as defined by Jürgen Habermas as “the social space generated in communicative action” (Habermas, 1996, quoted by Rennie, 2006, p. 34). Rennie points out that, according to Habermas, as the public sphere shrinks, there is a marked increase in political apathy, a relentless pursuit of economic and material self interest, and a rising tide of cynicism and social alienation (2006, p. 34). On the other hand, it seems reasonable to say that the other way round is valid, that is, when the public sphere expands, it will probably strengthen political engagement and social mobilization.

**Youth engagement and empowerment**

Finally, involving new generations in civic engagement and social mobilization seems to be a path towards social development, when one seeks to achieve lasting changes in society. As Tufte & Enghel put it “in recent years, youth have increasingly become the focus of the development policies of states, multi- and bilateral donor agencies, NGOs and CSOs. Not only are they perceived as key to economic, democratic and socio-cultural development, but young people worldwide are also understood as decisive agents with regard to peace processes and political stability on a local and global scale.” (2009, p. 11) Thus, theoretical frameworks addressing youth issues are crucial, and will greatly contribute to the analysis of the present case study, as young people are the main agents and, at the same time, the beneficiaries of NCC projects.

The working group for Youth of the Millenium Development Goals found out and highlighted the complicated conditions of the majority of young people worldwide, particularly in developing countries, such as high rates of unemployment, and inadequate education (Youth & MDGs, 2005, quoted by Tufte & Enghel, 2009). In addition, the youth is the most affected by the effects of the recent economic crisis.
On the other hand, the Youth & MDGs report states that “overall, current avenues for political participation are insufficient and consequently youth in many places are perceived as apathetic or disengaged. (...) Meanwhile, many young people are organizing locally and via the internet and informal youth volunteerism is at record levels. This means that young people are breaking through the mold of traditional political avenues and moving beyond voting as their sole civic responsibility”.

Tufte & Enghel states that enhancing citizenship is about being the ‘claimants of development’ rather than the beneficiaries. (...) “In telling their stories, engaging in media production or by using media to establish counter-publics, youth become involved as self-determined subjects pursuing objectives they themselves define, often times regarding social justice”. (2009, p. 14).

VI. Relevance of the study
In relation to Communication for Development as a whole, I believe this project might offer a contribution to the field given that there are plenty of grassroots social projects employing communication tools and strategies to achieve social change. Thus, I hope with this study, collaborate with the field analyzing some outcomes of this educommunication project run by NCC and, subsequently, contribute to strengthening the field of Educommunication with an up-to-date case study from a developing country which may be replicate in other similar contexts.

Educommunication has many points in common with others tools and strategies of Communication for Development such as the recognition of the crucial role media and communication play in social development and to strengthen democracy, along with a critical view upon mass media, the promotion of social and informal learning, and the empowerment of marginalized people throughout communication. However, Educommunication is not so often explored within Communication for Development literature in English.

For instance, in the seminal The International Encyclopedia of Communication, edited by Wolfgang Donsbach, in the entry about Development Communication by scholar Karin Wilkins, there is no reference to Educommunication, though Entertainment Education (Edutainment) is cited. Quoting Singhal & Rogers (2004), Wilkins states that Entertainment Education is defined as the “process of purposely

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7 Retrieved February 4, 2013 from http://www.communicationencyclopedia.com.proxy.mah.se/subscriber/uid=772/tocnode?id=g9781405131995_chunk_g97814051319959_ss20-1&authstatuscode=202
designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members’ knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms, and change over behavior”. She adds that modern entertainment education includes designing a campaign strategy that incorporates radio and television dramas, talk programs, comedies, music, animation, participatory theatre, interactive websites, and video games, largely to promote health and social issues.

On the one hand, in Latin America and Spanish literature, Educommunication is otherwise well known and recognized among scholars and practitioners within the field of communication for social change. On the other hand, Educommunication (theory and practice) is widely employed in Brazil in form of social projects involving young-people, mainly by grassroots NGS, and presents a body of literature in Portuguese (most of them draw on the work of Brazilian author Paulo Freire) with cultural contextualized specificities.

In addition, there is a new-launched undergraduate and postgraduate course on Educommunication in University of São Paulo, the top ranked Brazilian University. Thus, this is clearly a growing field in Brazil. However, it seems to me that this field in Brazil lacks connection and dialogue with the Communication for Development theoretical framework. Nevertheless, I do think Educommunication can be benefited from reflections and the critical view nurtured and developed within the wider field of Communication for Development, and if it can be linked with other strategies, tools and approaches from the latter.

So, I would be glad if this work may strengthen these linkages and contribute to insert Brazilian experiences in Educommunication within the global Communication for Development field.

VII. Findings and Analysis
I have divided this chapter into sections based on the features of development communication I intend to highlight in this study – (a) Youth empowerment and engagement, (b) participation and participatory communication, (c) community media, and (d) Educommunication.

The analysis intends to demonstrate how these characteristics of development communication appear in NCC projects, how the interviewees – youth and NCC staff - understand them, and how they shape their daily practices.
a) **Youth engagement, citizenry and empowerment**

Melkote (2000, p. 45) explains that while empowerment as a construct has a set of core ideas, it may be defined at different levels: individual, organization, and community; and operationalized in different contexts.

On individual level for the youth, one might highlight these testimonials.

> “You shift the way you see the world. The way you see and feel. That it might be a change, that it is not a lost cause. You turn to see differently and that you even can change and make the difference.” Luana, aged 17, participant of Intermedia project, answering how the project is influencing her life.

> “This project has raised something in me that I didn’t have. Before [the project] I knew how to do it, but I was afraid of doing it. From the moment I got here in this project, I have noticed many differences in me.” Hemily, aged 14, participant of Jovem Comunica Project

Rappaport describes empowerment as a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power, and legal rights. It is a multilevel construct applicable to individual citizens as well to organizations and neighborhoods; it suggests the study of people in context. (Melkote, 2000, p. 45). Quotes from the informants below illustrate the sense of empowerment described by Melkote. Youth interviewed have shared their sense of social influence and political power, or in other words, they believe they have a role to play in helping to address community issues. This is empowerment closely linked to their context.

> “You see beyond individualism. (...) You think about ‘us’ [instead]. you see the whole picture. Alongside the knowledge that you acquire here, you begin to create new opportunities. For instance, before getting here, I did not have plans for continuing studies, going to college. Now I do, I want to study photography; I want to pursue it, to go further. This project opens your mind. Before, I thought ‘I just want to get here, earn my money and go home’. Then, you start to realize the importance of communication, and the work we are doing inside community, and how the community is doing its work. Showing that the community can speak up. [You realize] that the community makes the difference, indeed. [And that it] can use its power to change.”
Alexander, aged 18, answering how the project is influencing his life.
“We manage to solve the problems of our neighborhood and our school. (…) Like sanitation and holes on the streets…” Lucas, aged 16, participant of Jovem Comunica Project

“Something that I do believe is that if we do nothing, it is going to remain the way it is. Because doing nothing is the worst way of doing something. So, how do we ‘hacker’ this, say it, these spaces to contribute with improvement processes, within the scope of direct intervention. But, also, we have to monitoring, publicizing and following what the government is doing. It is not only the base movement, but also the public sphere, which is where you have the potential to regulate things and escape from this neoliberalism.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

Based on statements above, it seems reasonable to affirm that youth participant of NCC projects are stimulated and taught on becoming social engaged, and consequently are been empowered as active citizens. Moreover, they have been supporting the community to seek their rights and to become a strong community, *de facto*. As posed by Cohen and Arato (1992, p. 22-23) “the rights to communication, to assembly, and association, among others, constitute the public and associational spheres of civil society as spheres of positive freedom within which agents can collectively debate issues of common concern, act in concert, assert new rights, and exercise influence on political (and potentially economic) society.”

Gaventa (2005: xii) cited by Tufte and Enghel has said that “engaging with the world is about articulating citizenship”. Tufte and Enghel continue stating that ‘enhancing citizenship is about being the ‘claimants of development’ rather than the beneficiaries. In telling their stories, engaging in media production or by using media to establish counter-publics, youth become involved as self-determined subjects pursuing objectives they themselves define, often times regarding social justice. (2009, p. 14)

Thus, based on the interviews with the youth participant of NCC projects, it seemed that the hands-on experience in producing media alongside the close contact with the community supporting them in their struggle to improve their living conditions have raised the youth awareness about citizenship and have helped them become active citizens beyond the right to vote.
I do believe that youth empowerment also rises from and depends on the social space the youth have in their community, and the fact of them being heard and having a voice. This creates the opportunity for the youth nurture self-confidence and will to participate in society. Thus, NCC managed to create those spaces for youth collaborate with their community, and youth is stimulated to do that, also. I have captured these features of youth empowerment from many interviewees, as highlighted below:

“I think this matter about power, and convoking will… I feel myself very powerful to change my community. I believe the simple fact that I feel myself powerful allows me to disseminate this feeling. The choice to change the community depends on the community itself, but you can show the importance of changing, how this is important, and how this is going to better its standard of life. I think we feel ourselves very powerful in relation to school, in our workplace, in our family life, towards the community. We feel very powerful. I particularly [see myself] as an actor of change and a multiplier of changes. We manage to empower people, and we manage to show the power they have.” Rodrigo, aged 18, participant of Intermídia project.

On community empowerment Melkote quotes Fawcett et al (1984) “community empowerment is the process of increasing control by groups over consequences that are important to their members and to other in the broader community.” This understanding of community empowerment echoes the experience of youth of NCC.

“We experience here that mobilization works. Having this awareness that ‘convocating will’ is important to change the realities of our territory, and adding this to the technical knowledge we acquire here. For instance, we have been in contact with the local government. So, knowing how to address our issues to these people [in power] to solve them, be it a public space, or infrastructure; sending official letters, acknowledging that the community must be present at the meeting, talking, and giving their opinions… So, I think we have power, indeed.” Felipe, aged 20, participant of Intermídia project.

According to NCC, empowerment refers to the process in which someone is attributed of power to making decisions. Within the social context, empowering regards

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8 Expression ‘convocating will’ is a free translation to ‘convocar vontades’, an expression created by Colombian philosopher Bernardo Toro, a leading Latin America scholar on Social Mobilization.
the possibility of one person, family or community to take a proactive attitude in relation to its own destiny, in a way that s/he are able to make the changes s/he believes is important to achieve better life conditions. (Adeve et all, 2012, p. 21, my translation)

“(…) Not to speak of reflections. We start to think more about our acts, thinking about how we talk to others, thinking about what kind of job we want to pursue. How we are going to be as a professional. For instance, I want to study Physical Education [on under-graduation], but I am not going to be simply a physical education professor, I am going to have something more that we’ve acquired here.” Heloisa, aged 19, participant of Intermidia project

“People think the youth don’t do anything, that they are lazy, [watching] television all day. Then with this project [Jovem Comunica] we have been recognized, that there are young people who want something.” Hemily, aged 14, participant of Jovem Comunica Project

“I have been here [taking part in the projects] since 2010. There were only three years, but you can see a complete difference in comparison with those who have not passed through the same constructive process as you. There are people who used to playing soccer with me and nowadays they are either in the [drug] traffic, or in jail, or even dead. It is a huge difference. If we weren’t… I am not saying that we would be working in the traffic, but we might be working in a place that does not offer anything besides the work, an alienating job, let’s say it, a job that you do careless, only for the money.” Rodrigo, aged 18, participant of Intermidia project.

“That’s what makes us different. We have this routine [in the project], and we believe that it can be done. That it may have a great work for the community and in the community. That ‘them’ [local residents] can have their things nearby. That they don’t need to wake up at 5 am to take that ‘mucuvuco’ [slang word for messy, overcrowded, and tight. She is talking about the train to downtown] and get stressed. You forget to think, what you are going to think about?!? [In these harsh conditions] Heloisa, aged 19, participant of Intermídia project.
Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice that even these youth do believe they are empowered and they have skills to help the community, it seems that they still recognize relations of structural power and the constraints they have as individuals. Thus, a development organization such as Foundation Tide Setubal and its Centre of Community Media works as a catalyst for social change, mobilization and empowerment.

“We’ve always said that it is great that people don’t feel like moving on to another place. But, [thinking about] how to improve where I live, I have come up with this. Sometimes, to change where we live we need to be strengthened. And sometimes to become strengthened we have to leave this place first for coming back later.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

“First, where we live, at least in my community there is no such thing [local mobilization] as in here [Jardim Lapenna where NCC is located], where local people gather to identify what are the issues of the neighborhood to solve them. There is no such thing there, and I get very frustrated because of this. When I get here I get happy because here is a very nice group.” Rodrigo is 18 years old and lives in a district nearby Jardim Lapenna.

“It is complicated because is like Rodrigo said, the community where we live doesn’t have the structures we have here [in NCC]. Here in Jardim Lapenna is different due to the role of Foundation Tide Setubal plays, gathering [people], promoting conversations. Perhaps because of this here is more effective. (…) Where I live is a bit complicated with the residents, although they have good will, they don’t mobilize for this.” Felipe is 20 years old and live in a nearby district.

“(…) But I cannot feel this path of intervention where I live. It is cool when you contribute with the territory [community] that you are, directly. (…) It’s cool when you feel that you are able to be an active participant with those that are close to you.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator, talking about her frustration for not be able to intervene in her own community of origin, as she lives in a nearby district.
“They [local authorities] said they wouldn’t do anything there, where there is a sanitation problem because of [the building] Itaquerão [a stadium for the 2014 World Cup]. They said they couldn’t do anything because the local people will be displaced from there anyway. They [local people] already know they are going to leave, that’s why they [local authorities] can’t help.” Hemily, aged 14, participant of Jovem Comunica Project, answering what happen when she reported a sanitation problem to local authorities.

Although this girl quoted above has become slightly frustrated with the response she received from local authorities, it is evident that this experience has taught her a little bit about the effects of political and economical interests, even global interests, on the daily life of marginalized communities.

According to Cadiz (2005), a scholar and practitioner of development communication, there are some common practical elements in communications for empowerment and participatory communication for development. Provision of access to information; putting users/beneficiaries and local people in control; building local people’s capabilities in communication; emphasis on small and appropriate media; learning with partners; working as a collective; capitalizing and building on felt needs; making it enjoyable; giving them hands-on experience; sharing resources.

Following there are some statements excerpted from interviews with youth and NCC staff that echo those principles of participatory communication highlighted by Cadiz.

“Something that we always say is that, at real the only one who wants the change is the one is suffering with the problems. So, [we work] towards contributing with them. For that we cannot be distant, not only physically but also ideologically.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

“We produce, and we get all kinds of knowledge, be it from the local people and when we go to a place doing research for the newspaper, so we produce and acquire knowledge.” Luana, aged 17, participant of Intermedia project.
“Our wish is that the local people write the stories. (…) Some schools teachers and school kids are already doing that. (…) There are many residents, also children and teens who have taken photos, made reportages.”

Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

“We are in charge of planning and publicizing the forum of Jardim Lapenna residents, advertising it within the local community. Producing posters, billboards, displays, and creating strategies to reach the community, and to attract them. Besides that, we help the community with our own knowledge. I am a graduate student of Engineering, and Jardim Lapenna [the local community] is passing through transformations, [it has] emerging demands on housing and urbanization. We [help them] to reclaim this issues through official letters to the local government, and we promote meeting between them and the local government, we mediate this conversation.” Felipe, aged 20, participant of Intermedia project

To conclude this section, one can realize from these quotes that all of them have a collective discourse, meaning they always use ‘we’, stressing they work as a collective and for collective interests. They have also a clear sense of ‘community’ (sometimes they call it ‘territory’). In addition, they highly value and work for improving local people’s participation, and they express their respect and consideration on local people’s knowledge. Finally, the youth and NCC staff strongly believe they must provide information for empower local people to undertake better decisions to improve their lives.

b) Participation and participatory communication

Pioneered by Brazilian Educator Paulo Freire (1997), the approach of participatory model emphasizes the importance of stakeholders, elsewhere also called beneficiaries and recipients, becoming involved in the development process, determining the outcomes rather than it being designed by external agency.

“There is no way to think about a communication for local development if it is not participatory. Because it comes as a strategy to strengthen a movement that already exists. The communication does not exist per se, it is not a project that is put, that raises and acts as it wants, but there is a situation, a reality, there are people, there are lives,
affective relationships, and symbolic relationships in this territory. So, the communication comes to think about strategies and to strengthen actions, to irradiate debates, to contextualize some things. That is why communication and education are together in this movement.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

“When they [local residents] come we ask them to sign a list [referring to residents forum and public meetings]. The most important thing is that they don’t give up. Being here [attending the meetings], showing that there are a lot of people, signing the list and sending it to local authorities alongside the request. If something changes, if betterments come, we show them that it came, and how it did, for them motivate themselves, for them to know that it worked, let’s continue.” Andreza, aged 18, participant of Intermedia project.

Above is an expression about the importance of local people participation and engagement in initiatives for local development and social change, an awareness that this young lady has already acquired from her experience in NCC projects. She is backed up by Servaes and Malikhao when they argue that participatory communication for social change sees people as the nucleus of development. (2005: 98)

“It got to be always with the [local] people. There is no way we be a hero who wants to bring solutions for the territory [community], with a look from outside. It has to be together with people in the territory. Within the movement, open to diverse possibilities, because this is a movement of abundance of visions, memories, feelings, and interests. We have to be together, there is no way we assume that development be a concept that I have learned and evolved or that a group has created it in an office and come to apply here. It is not that. It is a movement that arises from the territory itself, from their demands, their needs, from people experience. This is development.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

“We have this position of facilitating the dialogue between the actors. To stimulating, but not from the mayor’s office to the ground. But from real cases and experiences, to promote the implementation of public policies, making them work as they have to.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.
José Luiz Adeve, the NCC coordinator states that ‘participation is the soul of community communication. In this context, the whole production is non-profit making by the community and for the community. The collective authorship facilitates meeting of a fundamental principle of this work: an exclusive broadcast of topics of local interest. (Adeve et al, 2012, p. 22)

Field notes
April 2, 2013

The Forum of Residents of Jardim Lappena is an open meeting that is held every first day of month in Galpão, the community centre where NCC is located. The young people that take part in Intermedia project are in charge of mobilization of local people to attend the forum as well as ‘advertisement’ and other communicational productions for the forum; all of these communications strategy is based on community media.

(...) When I arrived, I became very surprise to see how crowded it was. There were around 200 people, local residents that had attended the meeting. Elderly people, young mothers with a child on their laps, children running and playing around, some men (probably unemployed), and young people.

(...) The main topic approached was housing. To open up the debate, some videos were screened. These videos were produced by the youth of Intermedia Project. The content was on the right to housing.

(...) Cometa (NCC coordinator) closes the meeting shouting like cheering people “Whose forum is it?” and everybody reply ‘It is ours!’ Like in a popular television show with audience. He does it twice. I think this was to reassure for the community itself the community ownership of the forum. As NCC staff explained, some people think the forum belongs to Foundation Tide Setubal, given that the meetings take place inside the Cultural Centre founded by Foundation Tide Setubal. So, it is always necessary to remember them that the forum belongs to the residents, and that they are in charge of maintaining it, participating, and bringing issues to be discussed. That is the only way people are going to attain their objectives. There is no way to address local issues without local people participation, i.e., on behalf of them. This is a discourse that Cometa is always constructing with them.

“The Little Box of Dreams came from an idea of us to get to know the dream of the community by the community itself. Then we said ‘why don’t ask them directly?’ So we did a questionnaire that we distributed in the forum of residents. We gave them piece of papers asking them to write down their dreams and put them inside the little box of dreams. We publicized the outcomes, and we wrote a story in the newspaper A Voz do Lapenna, the community newspaper that we produce. We did a table with the results and wrote a story showcasing the dreams and wishes of the community. (...) Now we are producing something bigger, like a game in the schools.” Rodrigo, aged 18, participant of Intermedia project.

“People here have a strong need for housing, possessing their own house, and to have a job within the area. These are the two things that stand out. I think getting a job in the neighborhood is very important [for local people]. There is also another dream [of local
people] that is a bus line to cross from here to the center of São Miguel [Jardim Lapenna is located across the train rail, so people need to walk about 30 minutes, crossing the train rail by the footbridge, to go to the center of the neighborhood where are found the stores, small business, the train station etc.] Rodrigo, aged 18, participant of Intermedia project.

As Servaes and Malikhao have said authentic participation, though widely espoused in the literature, is not in everyone’s interest. Due to their local concentration, participatory programmes are, in fact, not easily implemented, nor are they highly predictable or readily controlled. (2005:98). It seems that NCC has found their way to achieve participation of local people, according to this statement below from one of its educators.

“We have to listen to more than telling, this is what we believe. Because there is a lot happening and only the ones who are living the experience know the challenges, know how you have to know to dealing with the new, improvising, and dealing with these demands that are real.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

“We don’t have sender-receiver anymore. We have many senders and many receivers that receive in different ways and at the same time are interacting and building new symbolic fields. It is an ecosystem. There is no way to think on that linear form. When it comes to community media, there is no way to come with solutions and a model. So, participatory communication in the sense that everybody is considered in this relationship. They are listened to, they have a voice, and they co-build a collaborative process, in which everybody may recognize themselves, may express what they think, feel, and create together and feel together. Because when you know that you need to consider the other in this communication, and you know that it is not a linear movement, that you are getting an intervention at that moment, and that is a connected net, you understand that the other is as important as you. That s/he has right to voice as much as you have and what s/he thinks, his/her memories, what s/he means is so important as what you think you have to say.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator, answering what is participatory communication for her.
For a communication aiming at serving people, it is necessary to meet people communications needs, and to employ communication to help them to solve their problems. Having said that, it is fundamental to understand and ask people what they most need in terms of improvement. Of course, communication by itself is not going to solve people’s problems, but it might applied in a mode to support people organize themselves and to empower them. Thus, participation not only allows us identify the main issues of given community as well to legitimate the communication processes and products. As Cadiz points out “participation of the people enables us to devote our efforts and resources to concerns that they share and consider important. (2005, p. 146)

“Local people have to be there, [the paper] has to approach issues according to local needs that it is acknowledged as important to talk about, and to go deep in some issues. There was several local news, for instance on the work of sewer collector. The residents have said ‘we do not understand how this construction is going to be.’ So, in several issues we put the map, we interview local people and Sabesp [the department of sanitation at municipality], to get to know how this work would be, bringing information, opening the channels, sharing and solving doubts. Many stories came from suggestions from the local people, they say ‘it would be nice to talk about that, about the waste on the streets…’ so when we say that the paper has legitimacy is because local people recognize it has a potential of communication, for reaching [the community] and for bringing information.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

“We have developed a singular way of articulating. In this mode there is affection, bond, and an affective relationship, mainly with the education professionals, students, and local people.”
Cometa, aged 55, NCC coordinator

We’ve never brought something ready, we took an idea and then we added to other ideas and build together, according with schools needs, residents’ needs. Moreover, something that we’ve always done was to collect those people’s knowledge/wisdom. We dedicated a lot for this. We collect people’s stories about the time they were at schools, the vision they have on the city, the stories on educating from the teachers, their life stories. We have a column at the newspaper called ‘point of story’. Cometa, aged 55, NCC coordinator
Cadiz (2005, p.146) quotes Servaes (2003) elaboration of participatory communication for development “it is at the community level that the problems of living conditions are discussed, and interactions with other communities are elicited. The most developed form of participation is self-management. The principle implies the right to participation in the planning and production of media content. However, not everyone wants to or must be involved in its practical implementation. More important is that participation is made possible in the decision-making regarding the subjects treated in the messages and regarding the selection procedures”. This principle is very well illustrated on the following testimonials from the young media producers.

“[The community newspaper] was incepted from the wish of the young people to share with the local people what they thought. We have been in a great moment because in the last three issues we didn’t write anything. So, the paper is of everybody. The [paper] subjects are defined with the local people, and with the schools staff, always collectively. Until the last three issues we wrote some stories, but nowadays schools teachers, young people, school kids, and local residents do that. The residents contribute more with storytelling.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

We ask them to talk about their view, their knowledge, and what they would do to improve their collective life. Several times [in the past] we looked to participation with a kind of prepotency [arrogance]. We used to say ‘we need to qualify the community participation’. But, there isn’t such a thing as ‘qualify the community participation’; the point is to recognize the wisdom of people so they feel strengthened to take part in actions towards the collective welfare. Cometa, aged 55, NCC coordinator

To sum up, NCC has managed to involve local people, youth, teachers, and students following a simple principle, which seems to guide all NCC practices – not bringing anything ready, always constructing with the beneficiaries the objectives and paths to reach them, taking into account local people’s knowledge and listening to their stories.

c) Community media
“(…) all these things mentioned, *the little box of dreams*, posters we produce, Facebook… I think they are ways we have found to involve the community, joining forces and will, and to be able to co-ordinate them to achieve their goals of housing, and urbanization; joining the community and aggregating value. I think this is our work in communication. The stories in the paper are based on the community issues. It is not that global economy will not affect them, but the sanitation, housing, and transportation affect them directly.” Felipe, aged 20, participant of Intermedia project.

Howley (2005) simply puts that alternative media is “of, by, and for” people living in a specific place. I have selected for this section, some excerpts that demonstrate how NCC seeks to involve local people to assure the content produced is about them, by them and relevant for them. Moreover, it seems this is a thread of thought and practice for NCC and it has influenced the way the youth understand and do communication within NCC projects.

“I learned about the NCC projects and got amazed about the possibilities of community communication. Communications that seek to contribute to diminish social inequalities, for the people understand the local where they live, and how they can intervene in their reality.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

As Rennie (2006, p. 61) points out “to ignore the role of community media within civil society – its potential and realized status as a means to information distribution for a myriad of civil society organizations – is to underestimate its importance.” The interviews highly suggest that the community newspaper A Voz do Lapenna is recognized by local people as a valuable source of information and identification.

“Nowadays, there is a search for the paper because it is a source of identification and information for the local population following the situation of the district of Jardim Lapenna, [to know] what is going on here.” Felipe, aged 20, participant of Intermedia project.
“This matter of the paper has been asked is expanding, it is not only here at Jardim Lapenna. Where I live [nearby district] people ask so much ‘is there the paper yet?’, ‘Has it been published?’. So, it has been expanded a lot. I think it is going to grow more, because it is very informative. It explains the city, show the things of the neighborhood. It is cool!” Heloisa, aged 19, participant of Intermedia project.

It is also clear for the young communicators the importance of provide useful information through the community media products and channels. Both the youth and staff express a critical view on mass media, and that mass media do not represent local interests.

(…) Because, our goal is not to do this hegemonic communication that there is around with its aesthetic and content. Cometa, aged 55, NCC coordinator

“We think about important issues as health, education… It [street radio] can be either very harsh and critical, or it may be relaxed addressing the seasons of the year, tips on how to eat properly in the summer… Then you invite the guests, who are experts on the topic, like professors, or psychologists. It can target only young people, or otherwise the eldest. Then we set up the date, it must be on Sunday at the street market. Then we try to interact with people in the market. Sometimes there is a microphone for the audience, while there is this debate in the table. Then someone may talk, or questioning, or giving his/her opinion. It is very cool.” Andreza, aged 18, participant of Intermedia project.

The quote above illustrates the importance of taking into account local conditions and constraints when planning development interventions. NCC realized that the best time to reach local people was during the weekly Sunday open market. In addition, this would solve another resource constraint, as they did not have access and license for radio frequencies. Thus they created a street radio on the open market.

“The NCC until 2009 was about training young people who lived here in the community and developed a series of activities. They studied communication and thought about how this communication could contribute to local improving. (…) From 2007 to 2009 around 80 young people took part in NCC [projects] in its meetings and
productions. From this path came the community media channels, the newspaper and the schools radio.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

There is not such a unique and definite model of community media. It has to be incepted from the cultural, human, social and economic resources available within the community. What experience has shown to NCC staff and youth is that for the community they work with and for, the kind of community media that works best is based on face-to-face conversations and the message is easily and more effective spread out by word-of-mouth mainly. Nevertheless, they also develop different complementary media products to message diffusion such as leaflet, poster, and billboard, plus social media (Facebook and Blogging). These communications pieces are complementary to the main products that are the newspaper, street radio and street television. Thus, media convergence is also an aspect of NCC community media, meaning that one media outlet reinforces the information given in others.

“In fact, Facebook as a mobilization tool, even with the youngest, has not worked so well as word-of-mouth, a poster [leaflet], showing it [the poster] and talking to the people. This has been more effective.” Felipe, aged 20, participant of Intermedia project.

Interpersonal communication seems to be the main channel of communication for NCC. Although local people have free access to internet in an internet café provided by Foundation Tide Setubal, most of them still prefer to learn about NCC activities via face to face conversations. Thus, it reinforces that an effective community media is unique and presents singular features according to the community; mainly it has to be creative, flexible and respectful to local culture.

[Community media] is also kind of ‘tribal’, talking, talking loudly, singing, and gathering people in a circle. I think this is the first communication technology. (…) Emphasizing the importance and meaning of public space occupation. [Public space] may be a bar or a library. One may be in the middle of an open market or inside a place in a meeting discussing city issues. (…) [community media] is the occupation of public spaces so people can unveil their views, that is something that has to do with indigenous and African tribes. Cometa, aged 55, NCC coordinator
“Because we don’t focus on the technical aspects. It is all about how we feel and notice the territory [community]. How communication happens here, how we can take advantage of these resources, how we start a communication that makes sense and in which people recognize themselves. And [a communication] that has a creativity to convoke people” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

“Here is, in fact, [based on] a lot of word-of-mouth. We have a blog and Facebook, but this mediated communication… [It doesn’t work]. Here is [all about] word-of-mouth. You have to go door to door, sticking bills on business walls. You go to residents homes, talk to them, and ask them to call the neighbors. We talk to them, as they are very close because we are always there, with them, trying to facilitate the resident’s movements. The communication that works here is super informal.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

“It has to be a movement of not bringing the paper, but [asking yourself] do people here want a paper, how they want this paper, what they want in this paper?” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

Nowadays, it seems that local people recognized themselves in the NCC community media products, but information from respondents indicates that this was not the case in the beginning.

Before we started to produce the newspaper, the youth carried out a survey with local people and it was found that they would like to have a local newspaper, because there was not even a newsstand in here. However, the paper was not welcome at first, even thought it was chosen. When youth delivered it, people threw it away. Then, we had to begin this participative process bringing people to do it with us. Because when you feel that something is yours you don’t throw it away. So, we started this participative process so people feel themselves part of the paper. We did the editorial meeting [with them] to listen to what they wanted, even though at that point the youth produced the stories. Then we started to make convergence among media product. Then other channels came in, the radio and television. So, we advertise the newspaper on the radio programme, and the radio programming ‘suggest’ topics for the newspaper. Then we
won [them]. Nowadays we go out there with the newspaper on our hands and people ask for it. Andrelissa, aged 29, NCC educator.

“The paper is legitimated by the local people. They always ask for it, ask when it is going to be published, and some even advertised on it.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

To conclude this section, one may say that community media in NCC has a great emphasis in involving local people, listening to them, stimulating them to help in the production. In addition it is necessary that the content meets local people needs, and be useful for their daily lives. However, something that NCC lacks to makes its community media more effective is local people self-management. Up to present, residents are involved in the production, but not yet in the management of the community media resources.

d) Educommunication

Tufte and Enghel introduced their book Youth Engaging with the World with the recognition of youth (a socially constructed conception of age and not just a biological given) as a generation of actors and citizens who are increasingly exposed to and making use of media/ICT for entertainment and information purposes, for social networking and mobilization, and for knowledge sharing. (2009, p. 13)

“It [Facebook] is a way of us to communicate with each other. [A way] to take further what we have learned here, our thoughts that we cannot express everywhere. So, I think a social media serves also for this, for your express yourself e put what you have learned where you go. That is very good because, for instance, you post something you learn here, people read it, like it and all. And you feel you take this to more people. For instance, I have 900 friends [on Facebook], so these people are reading everything, so you manage to show that for more people, besides your friends here and of classroom.” Laiane, aged 17, participant of Intermedia project, telling about her use of Facebook.

The overwhelming presence of media in the contemporary society and its power to convey lifestyle, knowledge and information, along with the increasing spread of
ICTs form the landscape for the inception of Educommunication or Media Education. In this context, it becomes necessary for people to be able to influence their society and act as citizen and agents of change, not only be literate, but also be digital and media literate.

In Ulla Carsson words, “an important prerequisite for empowerment of citizens is a concerted effort to improve media and information literacy. Such skills that strengthen citizens’ critical faculties and ability to communicate, both of which enable them to use media and communication as tools and as a way to articulate processes of development and social change. In short, media and information literacy empowers people to influence and improve their lives – while promoting a well-oriented, democratic and sustainable society.” (Carlsson in Tufte and Enghels, 2009, p. 9)

In analyzing the responses from youngsters who take part in NCC projects and from NCC staff, I intend to highlight aspects of media and information literacy, citizenship skills, and additional abilities that NCC projects aim to enhance within its beneficiaries. As Carlsson stated these skills can strengthen citizens’ critical faculties and ability to communicate and can contribute to processes of development and social change.

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<td>April 9, 2013</td>
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| I went to the public school Reverendo Urbano, where there is a group of students who take part of Jovem Comunica Project. In the classroom were the group of dozen students (aged 10-16) along with Andrelissa (NCC educator) and a school teacher. They were in a discussion about the violence at school. Students were afraid of the school been closed down because of the violence, given that there were various incidents such as armed fights among students, some students that were threatening the teachers and so on. There was tension and fear in the air. 

(...) However, when Andrelissa proposed to kids to approach the violence issue in the radio programme they produce and broadcast in the school, the students said it wouldn’t solve anything. Then, Andrelissa tried to convince them about that, giving examples of how media can influence people behavior, such as fashion in soap operas. They agreed about that, but they remained skeptical. I was glad to see how Andrelissa managed to shift the issue of violence into a matter of media education. But, she didn’t sustain the debate, in other words, she didn’t insist with them to talk about violence in the schools radio. It seemed that she recognized that there must be some time for maturation, so she doesn’t impose anything.

So, even though they have been learning and taking part in this communicative project, they still don’t see communication as part of a solution. They were skeptical about the potential of communication to put a topic in the school agenda, or even in the community agenda. Perhaps that is the way the process of media education happens with no immediate outcomes. It probably takes some time.

Above I’ve highlighted how unpredictable a meeting within NCC project can be. It requires flexibility and quick response. The NCC educator referred above managed to
insert a new topic brought up by the participants of Jovem Comunica project into the debate. However, it is not an easy task. The learning process takes time. At first, the students seemed very skeptical about the effectiveness of putting the topic of violence on the school agenda. Maybe on the next meeting, they will be more willing to address the violence on their school radio.

According to Buckingham (2001, p. 2) Media Education is concerned with the full range of media, including moving image media (film, television, video), radio and recorded music, print media (particularly newspapers and magazines), and the new digital communication technologies. It aims to develop a broad-based ‘literacy’, not just in relation to print, but also in the symbolic systems of images and sounds. This is precisely what NCC manages to provide to its beneficiaries, the youth who take part in its projects.

As pointed out by Carlsson, “media and information literacy is needed for all citizens, but it is of decisive importance to the younger generation – to their performance as citizens, their participation in society, and to their learning, cultural expression and personal fulfillment. Throughout history, young people have often been active participants in the manifestation of social change, and most times their creative uses of media and innovative practices of communication have been crucial in the process.” (Tufte and Enghels, 2009: p. 9)

They [the youth] had training on video, photograph, and communication. But the idea is ‘how I use communication for life’. So, they do everything on communication here. They go to the forum, and to public meetings. So, [the idea] is ‘how I can use communication for the city’, and doing communication everywhere, regardless if they are going to be journalists. Andrelissa, aged 29, NCC educator

“I have learned a lot here on video editing. We have several training on radio, and photography… I really have learned a lot. We apply it either in the schools within the Jovem Comunica project or in the events that we plan and cover. We record and edit it. One of the projects we are involved is the game in the schools. It is a game for fun, but it is also based on the theme of Jovem Comunica project this term, that is Sustainability and Recycling. We are organizing this game with the students.”

Alexander, aged 18, participant of Intermedia project.
“I like to work at schools. We went there and produced some radio programmes with them [school kids]. My part was recording a poetry program. I also like to work with scripts; I am pursuing to make a workshop on radio to work in the schools or with children here [the cultural space where the project is located].”
Andreza, aged 18, participant of Intermedia project.

“Our focus is not the product, but the process. For instance, we’ve done workshops on photography. (...) we always start from reflections such as ‘what do you think about the possibilities of photography? It is not only to bring a photo to discuss about it in classroom, but search for new looks to the place where you live, for instance. Taking a picture and then to contextualize it, [observing] what is in scene, the way you snapshot it, and why you took that picture.” Katia, aged 20, NCC educator.

Buckingham also argues that Media Education aims to develop both critical understanding and active participation. It enables young people to interpret and make informed judgments as consumers of media; but it also enables them to become producers of media in their own right, and thereby to become more powerful participants in society. Media Education is about developing young people’s critical and creative abilities. (2001:2)

“There is a project we are developing that came from a collective idea, it is called Kit Ururaí. Ururaí was the indigenous name of São Miguel before [when it was inhabited by indigenous people]. It consisted of two CDs and two books. One of these books is, in fact, a comic book. Our aim is that this kit is delivered to public schools. What we have been learned in schools is basically the history of colonial Brazil. We think we could be advancing to know the history of our neighborhood. The second book would be interactive for kids playing, because playing is a way to learning. The two CDs will present musical productions, one with the history in form of music, and the other with radio productions. We have researched local history, created a script and a narration, and edited it. We tell the trajectory of the indigenous people in this neighborhood and how it was formed. Then we tell the impact the neighborhood got with the industrialization, with the arrival of Nitroquímica [a chemical works plant that started the ‘urbanization’ of the locality]” Douglas, aged 19, participant of Intermedia project (my emphasis)
“A fundamental thing when you start to work with the community is that you start to see the community as a field of possibilities. This was something that we didn’t see until then. We begin to understand that our community is very rich in many aspects, culturally, and historically. And that we don’t need to cultivate only an European culture that is imposed to us. **We begin to get proud about what we are, where we come from, and about our roots.**” Rodrigo, aged 18, participant of Intermidia project (my emphasis)

The excerpts above illustrate the critical and creative abilities that Media Education aims and managed to stimulate in the youth, as well illustrates what Servaes and Malikhao observe about participatory communication for development “development means lifting up the spirits of a local community to take pride in its own culture, intellect and environment. Development aims to educate and stimulate people to be active in self and communal improvements while maintaining a balanced ecology.” (2005:98)

Field notes
May 2, 2013
Today I went to observe how the youth of Intermedia works, how their daily practice is. There were five of them, one girl was working on a laptop, with earphones, by herself. At the other side, a group of four was creating a song. There was a boy playing guitar, fingerling, searching for the right tone and note. They were producing a jingle for a campaign. Another girl was creating the messages in the computer. I heard one boy suggesting ‘what if we say this…’, and other replied ‘No, this sounds hypocrite to me!’

(...) When I left the room, the coordinator’s assistant and the educator were talking about an issue that had risen among the youth. They were fighting that morning and they couldn’t work together properly afterwards. So the two NCC staff members were planning a staff meeting for next morning to tackle the problem with the youth. They turned to me saying “this is also part of their education on work rules and work collectively”. So, it is not only about media education, but also social skills.

I strongly believe, and I argue here for this, that Educommucation is an effective methodology for empowering children and youth as subjects in communicative process. It is a way of them being claimants of their own rights, on voice and being heard, on articulating ownership. Although it is focused on training children and youth on producing media, one positive side effect is the improving of educational standards and literacy, i.e., reading and writing skills.

“I started learning, and today the more I learn the more I like. It got fun, learning about the city, having eager for studying, that I did not have before…”
Heloisa, aged 19, participant of Intermedia project.

“We’ve learned how to communicate better.” Diogo, aged 15, participant of Jovem Comunica Project.

Improving the literacy of youth is also a goal of NCC projects. They seek this by stimulating youth to write stories to the newspaper, and to write scripts, and lyrics for the publicity campaigns they produce.

“We’ve learned how to write. It is not that we didn’t know writing, but we didn’t know how to create.” Eduardo, 15, Jovem Comunica Project participant.

For instance, Artur is a boy who had huge difficult to writing. But, then we found out that if he writes lyrics, he doesn’t have difficult. So, actually, if he writes a lyric or a text he is writing the same way. So, our aim is to contribute to the literacy [of youth], promoting reflections, and thinking throughout songs as well. Andrelissa, aged 29, NCC educator.

For the education of youth, NCC designed and implemented an extremely flexible curriculum, as explained below by the coordinator. One can see that it is not only technical skills for producing media. The youth can learn much about social issues in order to develop a critical view.

We have an open curriculum. We present to them [the youth] an educational proposal, but we also meet their educational needs. [I mean] their needs to deep some knowledge. We have three pillars: mobilization, community media, and city planning (o understand the city). (…) In addition, we think on strategies to promote reflection to overcome this view of man in the centre of everything [anthropocentrism]. (…) So, we attended their demand for Sociology. When they started doing community media, they presented the demand of studying digital media, and we provided a consultant to work with digital media with them. (…) So, the youth bring their needs of knowledge, for instance, when we started work with mobilization, I took plenty of material [texts] from Bernardo Toro. We look for a book about a topic they need to know better. Cometa, aged 55, NCC coordinator.
The responses from youth also demonstrate that Educommunication promotes their awareness and a critical view regarding social issues.

“As I got ‘obsessed’ about social inclusion, it comes from this cultural capital; from those spaces we have been gone, the environment we live. I think this is what adds value to our discourse.” Felipe, aged 20, participant of Jovem Comunica Project, answering how they became so articulated and social concerned.

This year, Jovem Comunica Project is focused on ‘our common planet’. So, during the first term we are promoting reflections on ‘how the planet should be to have life and to live itself’. On the second term, the students and teachers are going to make an intervention on the territory, such as forums to discuss about the city and education, in a systemic approach, calling families and so on. Cometa, aged 55, NCC coordinator.

Educommunication also has the advantage of being a hands-on experience for youth. In addition, it seems that working with ICTs and digital devices seduces and attract young people and seems to be natural to them. As argued by Carlsson youth have had key roles in citizen media, in alternative media that stimulate public debate, or in campaigning for particular causes such as HIV/AIDS prevention, political freedom, freedom of expression, fair trade, etc. Different internet platforms like Facebook, YouTube and blogs have become rapidly growing virtual sites that give shape to new forms of social networking, communication and mobilization, primarily amongst youth. (Tufte and Enghels, 2009:9)

“I learned about this project, that it would be more professional, more like learning while doing a job…” Rodrigo, aged 18, participant of Intermedia project.

“I came to the selection process [for the project] to be able to work and study at the same time. This is the character of the Intermidia.” Felipe, aged 20, participant of Intermedia project.
“We use social media for the Project also. When we had elections we did the voting and the campaign also via Facebook.” [On the occasion of the last election for mayor of São Paulo, the students simulated an election in the school].

Eduardo, 15, participant of Jovem Comunica Project.

During the election for mayor of São Paulo city, the school kids that take part in Jovem Comunica project were stimulated by NCC staff to produce a simulation of election, being candidates and doing political campaign for other students. This was a civic education activity that managed to involve many of the students. This is also an example of youth creativity, reaffirming what Carlsson states “at the core of this creativity and these innovative practices is media and information literacy. Young people’s competence in using media, their ability to produce, understand and interact with the multiplicity of both new and old media formats and technologies have been instrumental in the manifestation of social processes of change. (Tufte and Enghels, 2009, p. 9)

“Cometa [the coordinator] says ‘let’s do this’, and we reply ‘but, we don’t know how to do this. ‘But, we are going to do it’, Cometa says. Then, we go onto Google…”

Rodrigo, aged 18, participant of Jovem Comunica Project.

I think this quote above summarizes the process of teaching and learning within NCC projects. It is spontaneous, hands-on and do-it-yourself experience, and is highly influenced and aided by information and communications technologies.

VIII. Conclusion

At the beginning of this study I had the assumption and suggested that Educommunication is a methodology that has the potential to engage and empower youth for social change. The questions that has guided me in this study is: in what ways can an educummunicaiton project enhance social participation and contribute to local development? What are the main features of NCC projects in regard to social participation and local development that might characterize it as a Communication for Development strategy?

This research has provided me evidences that it is, in fact, a tool for social change, given that NCC projects promote local participation, youth engagement, citizen
education for both youth and local people. Educommunication engages and empowers youth, primarily, because of the natural attraction the ICTs have on the new generations and the easiness the youth deal with it. However, when NCC combines this with community media, the outcomes expand involving the whole community to collectively address issues that concern all.

Educommunication *per se* is a valuable methodology to educate the new generations in a wider sense, given that on one hand, it builds youth capacity on critical view of media, besides enhancing their schooling, reading and writing, and civic awareness and engagement. On the other hand, media education also enables youth to become producer of culture and information, stimulating them to have their voice heard in their own ways. This enhances their sense of belonging, agency and citizenry, stimulating their interest in contributing to improve their communities.

However, Educommunication has its outcomes expanded when it is combined with community media, because it is not solely on the hands of youth to make the transformation the marginalized and impoverished communities need, given that it is crucial to involve all the community actors such as the elderly, stakeholders, policymakers and local government to achieve lasting social changes.

Thus, in combining Educommunication with the production of community media NCC practices present some features of development communication such as youth empowerment through media and civic education, community engagement, and participatory communication. Hence, I hope to have demonstrated evidences to make clear the place Educommunication might have among tools and strategies of Communication for Development.

However, it seemed that the weakness of NCC projects is that their methodology lacks training on social entrepreneurship and efforts for sustainability. The responses from the youth interviewed demonstrated that, though they feel empowered, they still feel insecure about intervene in social realities by their own. Thus, the question is what is going to happen with this young people after they leave the project. Are they going to pursue on this movement and processes of social change and collective actions? Most of the respondents said that this experience of taking part in NCC project has transformed them in many ways and influenced the way they see themselves and their communities. Even though not all of them are going to be journalists or communication practitioners, they emphasized they have become social aware and consequently, they are better able to practice their citizenship, regardless their chosen profession. However,
a further study will be necessary to analyze the influence of the Educommunication in the participant’s lives and the sustainability and continuity of process of empowerment and social change the beneficiaries – youth and local people – have gone through.

The sustainability of the community media newspaper and lack of resources were also mentioned as a concern of the youth, as cited below.

“\text{We’ve created a project called “An eye on the oil” in which we teach how to collect the oil [soy oil] within the community and then get money from it to sustain the paper. Rodrigo, aged 18.}"

On the other hand, NCC also lacks systematic monitoring and evaluation processes. There is an oral and informal evaluation that they carried out with their beneficiaries, be it local people and youth, collecting their perceptions about its projects, which is video recorded. Thus, I think an important contribution the field of Communication for Development might offer for them would be creating an effective method of assessing and monitoring their strategies and outcomes.

Hence, a path for further studies would be to follow these youth and the community development to verify to what extent NCC projects has influenced their life conditions. In addition, this author was not able to interview the local people, given the constraints of time. However, I do recognize the importance of apprehend the sense of ownership of community in relation to the community media production and how this is empowering them and improving their lives by their own voice.

To conclude, it has been a valuable experience for me personally. Firstly, because I could see and apprehend how things happen on the ground, at the community with local people. I have learned that each community has its pace, demands, culture and resources to solve their issues which have to be considered when one think about the communication that has to be put for community service. It requires patience, humility, creativity and trust on people potential. I have also learned about the constraints, challenges and possibilities of a participatory, communication for social change.

Secondly, because I have improved, and even shifted, the way I see the youth. The common sense lies on the ‘so called’ apathy of the youth and youth disenchantment. However, what I have found here was outstanding young citizens, who
are social engaged and passionate about the role communication can play in social change.
IX. References


**Electronic sources**

Rede Nossa São Paulo (Our Sao Paulo Network) – [www.nossasaopaulo.org.br](http://www.nossasaopaulo.org.br)

The follow attachments are the field notes in full, the interview guide and pictures of the fieldwork and illustrative of NCC practices.

a) Field Notes

April 2, 2013

The Forum of Residents of Jardim Lappena is an open meeting that is held every first day of month in Galpão, the community centre where NCC is located. The young people that take part in Intermedia project are in charge of mobilization of local people to attend the forum as well as ‘advertisement’ and other communicational productions for the forum; all of these communications strategy is based on community media.

So, I went to the forum that day to see what happens there and how it happens. I take a bus, the metro, and the train, and after 1h30 I get there. It is far away from the downtown. It was like I was heading to countryside. Actually, it is more or less, given that when you are approaching São Miguel train station, you can see a road beyond the neighborhood. That is the road to countryside and to the coast.

When I arrived, I became very surprised to see how crowded it was. There were around 200 people, local residents that had attended the meeting. Elderly people, young mothers with a child on their laps, children running and playing around, some men (probably unemployed), and young people.

The main topic approached was housing. To open up the debate, some videos were screened. These videos were produced by the youth of Intermedia Project. The content was on the right to housing.

In front of the audience there were three men behind the table apparently local authorities.

When I got there, one of these men, and engineer representative of the Department of Housing at the municipality was explained how it works. The municipality has a social housing program. He said that there is some bureaucracy, and that they receive daily a lot of requests of housing. He explained the criteria for select priorities and so on.

Someone at the audience asked permission to speak. He was a young man in his late twenties. He said there were a lot of people who were displaced due to a huge fire that had occurred eight months ago in a nearby slum. He complained that he and many others had already request a solution from the municipality, but so far not has happened.
He shared that he was living with family members in a very humiliating situation. He was demanding solution.

At that point, Cometa (NCC coordinator) asked people to organize themselves and write down their names in one list that would be forwarded to the municipality. People who are in risk areas, especially. Then they would have how to follow up the processes. He emphasized the need to do things in the right way, following the rules and protocols. That is the only way the community can pressure for solution, he said. He said “we only get answers, when we know how to question”.

A community leader stands up, and waving a piece of paper, said she had requested solution, but until now nothing have happening. She turns to the authorities and says ‘if you help us now, we help you later’. At this moment, Cometa very respectfully says to everybody ‘folks, we have to remember that during centuries we have feed this way of doing politics based on favouritism, ‘toma lá dá cá’ (an expression meaning ‘I give something you want and you give me something back’). But we have to be aware that we have rights, and the government has obligation toward the population. This is not exchange of votes.

A young lady participant of Intermedia project asks the engineers if they have some plan for the residents who are living in risk areas. Again, the engineers explain how things work in the Department of Housing of Municipality and how a public construction (with public money) works.

Again, someone at the audience questions when they are going to give an answer for the people. And Cometa again explains that as soon they organize the lists, the NCC would forward to the municipality and follow up.

Change of topic. Now, Cometa asks for a municipality officer named Renata, who works in the Department of Justice and is based at the office nearby. She came to explain to people the public services they can find there, and how to access them. She explains that people can issue documents there such as ID, birth certificate and so on. There is also a service for jobseekers there. In addition, she tell people that the office co-ordinate a Council for Residents, where people have access to workshops about citizenry, ‘what is public sector, how the government works, the role of a community leader, the role of citizens, etc.’ The office also offers a community mediation service to mediate conflicts and legal issues amongst neighbors. They have social work for protecting and help women against domestic violence. And she happily announces that
they are planning for the following month a community wedding, that is, a collective wedding ceremony for free for poor people.

After her talk, the engineer emphasizes the importance of having documents as ID in order to request social housing. He said that a lot of people cannot access the right because they don’t have ID. I was shocked! Even knowing the reality of poor people, ‘how come in a urban and huge city such as Sao Paulo, people still do not have an ID, the first right to access all the other rights!’ But then I recalled that around 13 million of Brazilians do not know how to read and write.

Then, a health worker recalls mothers to take children for the coming vaccination campaign. Cometa (NCC coordinator) closes the meeting shouting like cheering people “Whose forum is it?” and everybody reply ‘It is ours!’ Like in a popular television show with audience. He does it twice. I think this was to reassure for the community itself the community ownership of the forum. As NCC staff explained, some people think the forum belongs to Foundation Tide Setubal, given that the meetings take place inside the Cultural Centre founded by Foundation Tide Setubal. So, it is always necessary to remember them that the forum belongs to the residents, and that they are in charge of maintaining it, participating, and bringing issues to be discussed. That is the only way people are going to attain their objectives. There is no way to address local issues without local people participation, i.e., on behalf of them. This is a discourse that Cometa is always constructing with them.

April 9, 2013

I went to the public school Reverendo Urbano, where there is a group of students who take part of Jovem Comunica Project. In the classroom were the group of dozen students (aged 10-16) along with Andrelissa (NCC educator) and a school teacher.

They were in a discussion about the violence at school. Students were afraid of the school been closed down because of the violence, given that there were various incidents such as armed fights among students, some students that were threatening the teachers and so on. The climate was heavy.

The situation comes to a point that a general assembly was set up for that week with parents, school staff, and students to seek for a solution. It seemed that problem began because there were a handful of students who were in probation, i.e, kids that have committed a crime, having gone to an institution and then released. It was said that those kids go to school holding guns and knives, threatening teachers and others
students. Moreover, there were rumors that these kids worked for drug dealers inside school.

Andrelissa explained to me that this was not the topic planned to be discussed that day within the project, but when she arrived all the students seemed terrified about the situation of violence, so she thought it would be better to open space for this discussion instead. Later on she shared with me that the situation seemed very bad, given that the Principal was supposedly in a leave due to healthy issues, but no one knew exactly what his problem was. So, there were suspicions and rumors about him have had threatened.

However, when Andrelissa proposed to kids to approach the violence issue in the radio programme they produce and broadcast in the school, the students said it wouldn’t solve anything. Then, Andrelissa tried to convince them about that, giving examples of how media can influence people behavior, such as fashion in soap operas. They agreed about that, but they remained skeptical. I was glad to see how Andrelissa managed to shift the issue of violence into a matter of media education. But, she didn’t sustain the debate, in other words, she didn’t insist with them to talk about violence in the schools radio. It seemed that she recognizes that there must be some time for maturation, so she doesn’t impose anything.

So, even though, they have been learning and taking part in this communicative project, they still don’t see communication as part of a solution. Perhaps that is the way the process of media education happens with no immediate outcomes. They were skeptical about the potential of communication to put a topic in the school agenda, or even in the community agenda. Perhaps that is the way the process of media education happens, with no immediate outcomes. It probably takes some time.

When I asked them what would be a solution for this problem, they had difficult to answer, but eventually some said that the Principal and the school staff should be more authoritarian. They should expel the bad students, the rowdy teenagers. Then, Andrelissa asked if they would like to be treated with such authoritarianism. They seemed a little bit confused, but at the end they agreed that authoritarianism would solve the problem of violence at school.

May 2, 2013

Today I went to observe how the youth of Intermedia works, how their daily practice is. There were five of them, one girl was working on a laptop, with earphones,
by herself. At the other side, a group of four was creating a song. There was a boy playing the guitar, fingering, searching for the right tone and note. They were producing a jingle for a publicity campaign on the next residents’ forum. Another girl was creating the messages in the computer. I heard one boy suggesting ‘what if we say this…’, and other replied ‘No, this sounds hypocrite to me!’

Then, an young lady arrived, and after she said hello to everybody, she started to turn on the computer. She is Juliana, an undergraduate student of Sociology. She is volunteering at NCC, and basically she does some workshops on topics of Sociology with the youth, as part of her mandatory internship to get diploma. She told me that she had asked Cometa to volunteer there, and at first she was supposed to give just one class to them, but Cometa asked her to do a series of workshops on Sociology. It would be part of their education offered by the project.

Today, she talked about gender. She said that this was a continuation from last workshop in which she addressed notions of nature versus culture, according to her she drawn upon the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. I was impressed by the high level introduction of sociology, given that the time I heard about Bourdieu I was in the third year of college.

She opens up the debate saying that her aim was to de-construct some concepts on gender. The youth seemed very interested and participated attentively in the debate about genre. They seemed to recognize the importance of that debate and the opportunity they have to take part in such high level discussion. They shared their viewpoints and stories about sexism, stereotypes and so on. I had to leave before the end, but I thought the youth were enjoying it very much and it was a rich discussion.

When I left the room, the coordinator’s assistant and the educator were talking about an issue that had risen among the youth. They were fighting that morning and they couldn’t work together properly afterwards. So the two NCC staff members were planning a staff meeting for next morning to tackle the problem with the youth. They turned to me saying “this is part of their education on work rules and work collectively”. So, it is not only about media education, but also social skills.
b) Interview guide –

**To NCC team**

1. How are the responsibilities of each member of the team – coordinator, assistant, communications technician? What you do in the day-by-day of NCC?
2. It is said in the institutional messages that NCC employs participatory approach to its activities, involving local community. What would be the meaning of participatory communication for you? How do you involve the local community in NCC activities? Why participation is important?
3. How is the process of media production?
4. How the media production is delivered?
5. Is there any kind of assessment (formal or informal) and monitoring of NCC activities? Be it internal or/and external (from local community and from teenagers participants)?
6. How does NCC seek to influence policymakers and local authorities regarding the community issues?
7. How does NCC mobilize the local population?
8. What is empowerment in your opinion?
9. What is Educommunication?

**To Youth participants of NCC projects**

1. How did you get to know about the NCC projects?
2. Why you decided to take part in NCC projects?
3. What have you learned in NCC projects?
4. Do you think this learning (knowledge) is helping you, or is useful? In which way?
5. What do you think is the main issues in your community?
6. How do you envision your community in the future?
7. Do you think you can do something to help your community? What?
8. Do you think your participation in NCC helps you to do that?
9. Do you use social media? If so, did you increase your use of social media after you have started in NCC activities?
c) Photos

[Image 1: Residents' Forum 1]

[Image 2: Residents Forum 2]
adolescents of Jovem Comunica Project 1

adolescents of Jovem Comunica Project 2
Billboard made by Intermedia youth 1

Youth of Intermedia Project 1
Youth of Intermedia Project 2

Street TV – local community gathered in a public space to watch the community television broadcast
Street radio: a mobile radio Studio set up in an open market

An elderly local resident being interviewed for the community newspaper A Voz do Lapenna.
NCC staff talking to teenagers about the newspaper content.

NCC location 1
Jardim Lapenna surroundings 1