



Decolonizing the “rural:” Rural economies and radical democracies in sustaining futures

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Acknowledgments

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Ambar Basu

Mahuya Pal

Iccha Basnyat

Induk Kim

Nadine Yehya

Lalatendu Acharya

Raihan Jamil

Shaunak Sastry

Agaptus Anaele

Rati Kumar

Sydney Dillard

Uttaran Dutta

Christine Spinetta

Rahul Rastogi

Zhuo Ban

Kang Sun

Jagadish Thaker

Asha Pandi

Dyah Pitaloka

Dazzelyn Zapata

Arnab Roychowdhury

Anuradha Rao

Satveer Kaur

Munirah Bashir

Monishankar Prashad

Daniel Teo

Sarah Comer

Naomi Tan

Ahmed Abid

Somrita Ganchowdhury

Ashwini Falnikar

Afreen Azim

Desiree Soh

Raksha Mahtani

Overview

- ❖ Colonialism and the Rural
- ❖ Culture-Centered Approach (CCA)
- ❖ Radical democracies





Global Trajectories: Neocolonial Capital

- ❖ Colonial development interventionism
- ❖ Interpenetrating global boundaries.
- ❖ Power of financial capital.
- ❖ Environmental risks and disproportionate burdens borne by the poor; Global climate change.
- ❖ Land Grab
- ❖ “Displacement by dispossession” (David Harvey); increasing global inequalities
- ❖ Migration and flow of labour/International Division of Labour/Structural Adjustment Programs
- ❖ Precarity of work and global dispossessions
- ❖ Increasing concentration of power/wealth in the hands of transnational elite.
- ❖ Transnational power inequalities are also geographical, deriving from the power of the Nation State.

Cold War Ideology of Capital

- ❖ Colonizing spaces of the Third World.
- ❖ Incorporated into the hegemonic formations of imperialism.
- ❖ Targeting the rural as a site of transformation.
 - ❖ Indonesia
 - ❖ Malaysia
 - ❖ Philippines
 - ❖ India
- ❖ Rural as primitive.
- ❖ Rural as passive.
- ❖ Rural in need of technological solutions created from global centers of power.
- ❖ Development as incorporation of the rural into the logics of the global free market.
- ❖ Market-based solutions of:
 - ❖ Agriculture
 - ❖ Food
 - ❖ Reproductive technologies

TRICKLE-DOWN

- ❖ Development benefits captured in economic growth will trickle down to the poorest segments of society.
- ❖ Economic growth as a solution to poverty alleviation.
- ❖ Access to capitalism through open markets will bring about development.
- ❖ Communication scholars and civil society organizations as agents of top-down change

COMMUNICATION AND NEOCOLONIAL DEVELOPMENT

Modernization Theory

- Rastow, Lerner, Rogers, Schramm
 - {Institute of Communications Research - ICR}

Communicative Transformations

Communication Technologies

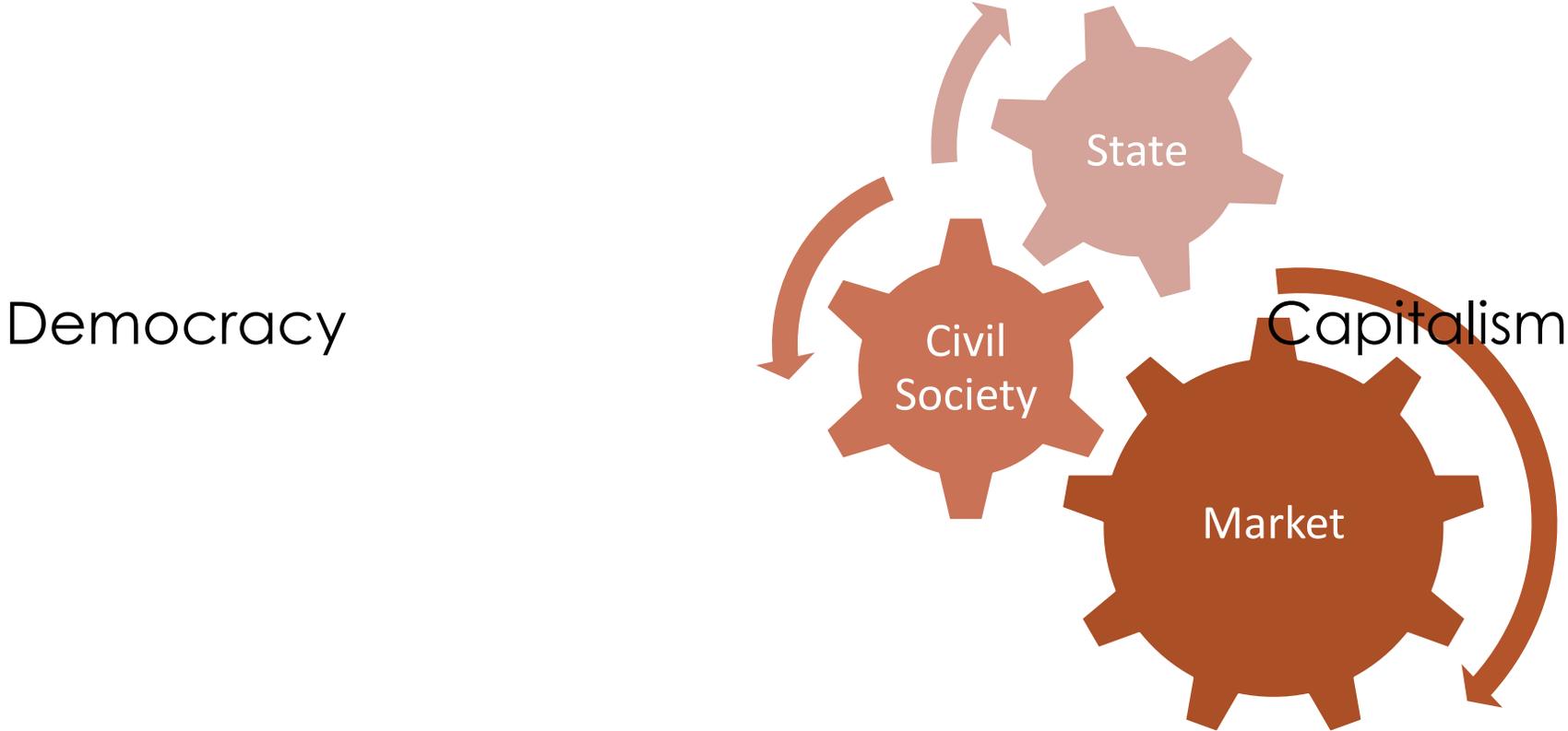
- Radio, Television (Satellite), Digital

Diffusion of innovations

Lerner (1968)

“...millions throughout the Middle East are yearning to trade in their old lives for such newer ways is what modernization promises to most people...the Western model of modernization exhibits certain components and sequences whose relevance is global. **Everywhere, for example, increasing urbanization has tended to raise literacy; rising literacy has tended to increase media exposure; increasing media exposure has “gone with” wider economic participation (per capita income) and political participation (voting)**...The point is that secular process of social change, which brought modernization to the Western world, has more than antiquarian relevance to today’s problems of the Middle Eastern tradition. Indeed, the lesson is that Middle Eastern modernizers will do well to study the historical sequence of Western growth.” (pp. 45-46)

Information communication technology for development (ict4d)



Technology/Media



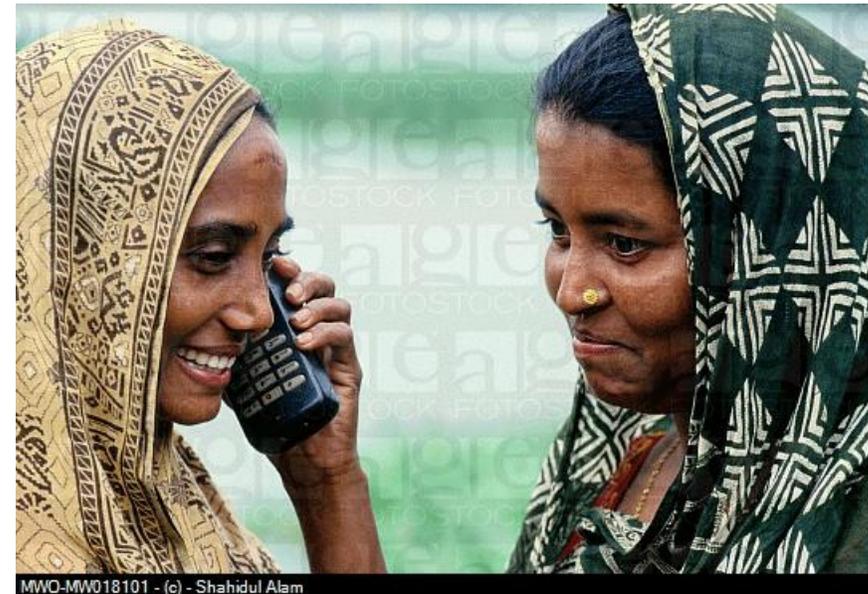


The New Subaltern

Participatory technologies



Empowerment



The new subaltern is the subject of digital/new technologies, having been incorporated into these technologies as:

A site of profiteering

Global Trajectories: Communication

- ❖ Increasing marginalization of the poor and the rural.
- ❖ Reliance on experts to carry out policies and programs.
- ❖ Depletion of democratic possibilities.
- ❖ Increasing violence and the role of police and military.



Problematizing Communication

Communicative Inequality

Representation

- Recognition

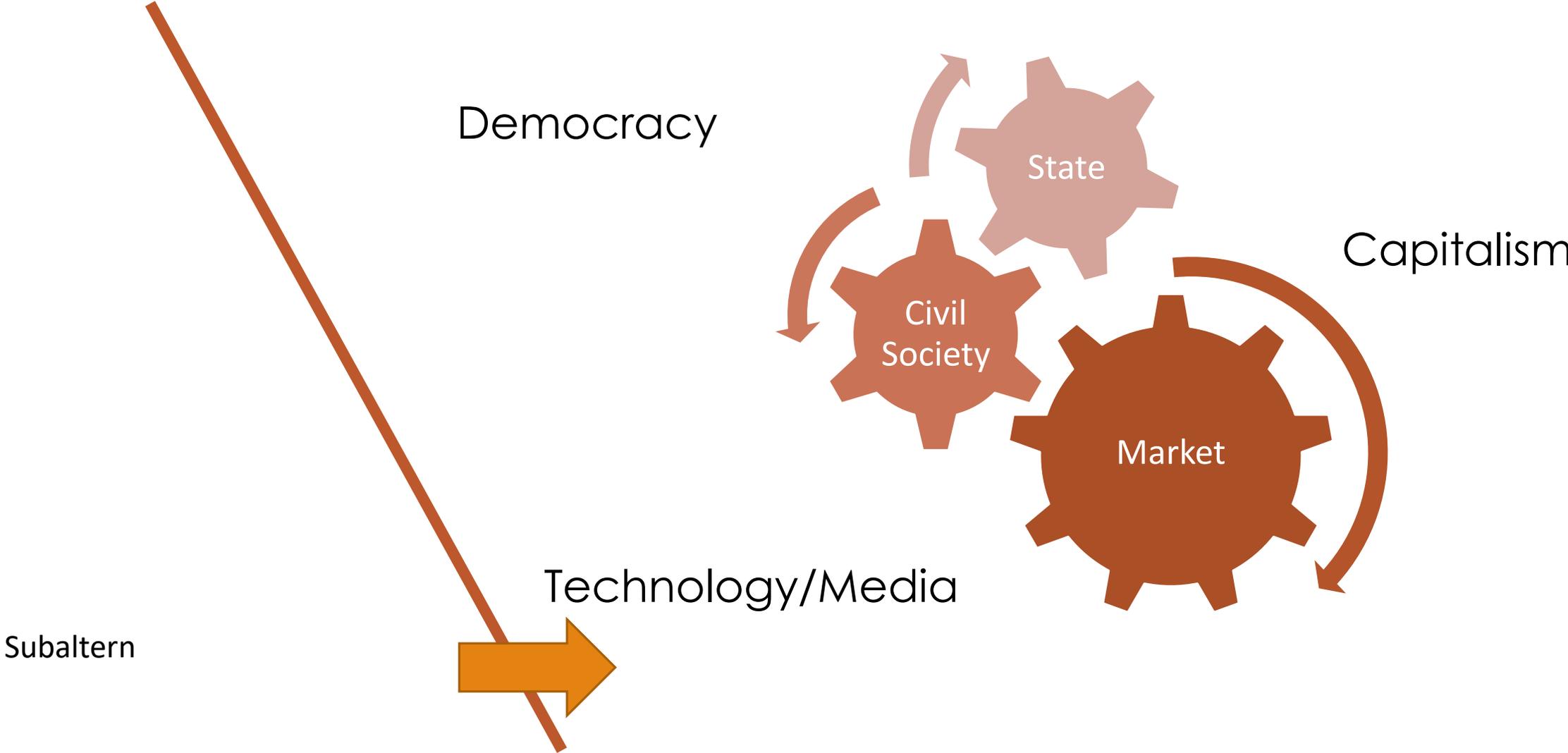
Structural Inequity

Access to resources

- Access to policies and programs

Communication as Erasure

The Davos Consensus



Culture-Centered Approach: Decolonizing Communication

- ❖ “Learning to Learn from Below” (Spivak, 2004)
- ❖ Patient listening to an ethic of the other
- ❖ Working toward an other imagination

Inverting the dominant structures of meaning making.

Listening to Voices

- ❖ Erasures: Our presence as sites of erasure
- ❖ Communication as listening
- ❖ Listening that disrupts the silences perpetuated by the dominant structures of knowledge production: Inverting techniques
- ❖ Listening as an entry point to imagining alternative social-political-economic structures
- ❖ Listening as a framework for making “impure” dominant categories of the mainstream

Infrastructures of Listening

Listening as an entry point to disrupting silences perpetuated by the dominant structures of knowledge production/techno-determinism



Listening as an entry point to imagining alternative social-political-economic structures



Listening as a framework for making impure dominant categories



Decolonization: Infrastructures of Listening

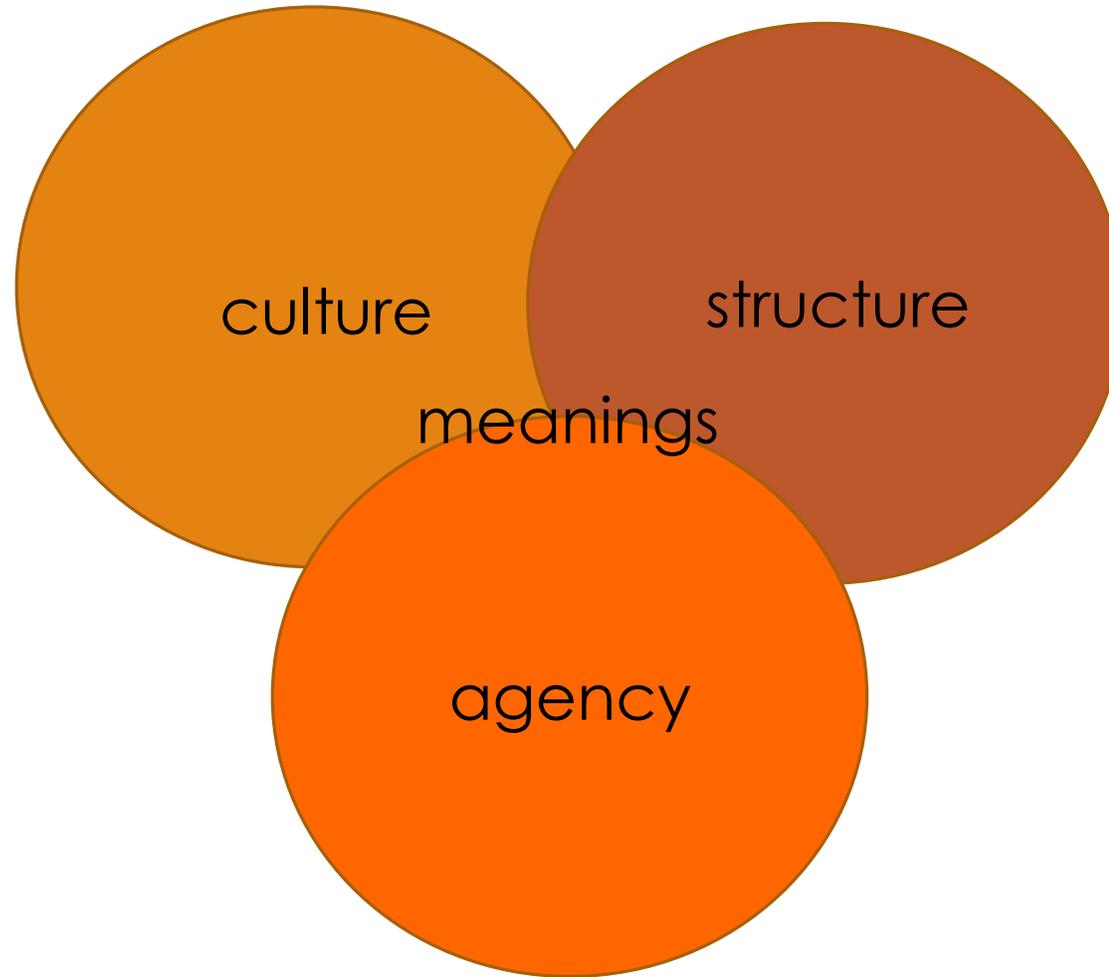
“The powerful want to tell things the way they see them. In their own way. In ways that feed their interests. So what is your role. Listen to us. Work with us. Collaborate on things that we can do on the ground that represent our interests. It has been so many times that our interests are not really heard. The community feels isolated, and no place to go to. So we work together in making the avenues where our voices can be heard such that they matter.”

- Rosie Thomas, Lead Community Organizer, Communities and Universities Addressing Health Disparities, Lake County, IN, late Executive Director, Lake County Minority Health Coalition

“When we hold these cameras, we tell our stories. When we run the radio station in the community, we tell the stories grounded in our lives. So is not the money that the big people pay to sell their version, which is always about making profit by making fools of us. So on the radio, these are stories of what farmers are really going through here in Warrangal, and in Pastapur.”

- Nadamma, Lead Community Organizer and Advisory Board Member, Deccan Development Society

CULTURE-CENTERED APPROACH



Rural voices

- ❖ Imaginations of democracy as direct control over communicative processes.
- ❖ Ownership of communicative infrastructures.
- ❖ Voices of the margins imagining development.
- ❖ Anchoring meanings of development in local epistemologies.
- ❖ Partners
 - ❖ Grounded in the ontologies of the local
 - ❖ Grounded in the epistemologies of the local





Voices of women farmers

“What we eat is what we grow. This is what our mothers have done for generations. No cotton. No Bt. We grow our own crops, food crops, crops that connect to soil. We don’t depend on anyone for these crops. We protect the seeds, and share them with each other. The seed bank is for the whole community, and for other communities. How can just take some seeds and say you own them. And tell me, why does the agricultural research station do just all that, to kill our agriculture here. They want everyone to grow Cotton. Who will then grow the food?”

“I know what I want, what food I want for my family. I am not going to let my husband, or the seed agent, or the government worker to tell me what to grow, making false promises to me about lots and lots of money. Money will come and go, but these food crops, these are our own and they will pass on. We have to pass them on.”



Capacities of transformation

- ❖ Alternative economic logics
- ❖ Grounded in rurally rooted theories of development
- ❖ Imaginations of futures anchored in rural livelihoods
- ❖ Rural stories as sites for transformation
- ❖ Rurally rooted imaginations of sustenance
- ❖ Foregrounding sharing, collectivization, and community ownership processes
- ❖ Centering the commons



Rural Health

- ❖ Rural-urban differences in access to resources of health and wellbeing.
- ❖ Polymorphic health practices amid structural inaccess.
- ❖ Re-defining health as a community resource.
- ❖ Building health resources
 - ❖ Traditional cultural resources of health
 - ❖ Irrigation systems
 - ❖ Drinking water systems
 - ❖ Health systems



Farming and Health



- ❖ Theories of agriculture-environment-health from the global South.
- ❖ Health and wellbeing in the ecosystem.
- ❖ Food practices for sustainability.
- ❖ Frames of organizing in the backdrop of the neoliberal transformation of agricultures.
- ❖ Processes of organizing.
- ❖ Resources generated
 - ❖ Advocacy interventions
 - ❖ Seed banks
 - ❖ Community radio
 - ❖ Community video

Ab-using social change communication

- ❖ Reimagining communication as transformative politics of social change.
- ❖ Co-creating habits of “radical democracy” at the margins.
- ❖ Teaching the everyday intricacies/methods of governmentality and “learning to learn from the subaltern.”



Social Change

Practical Interventions in the Change Imaginary.

Looking forward



- ❖ Building South-South solidarity networks
 - ❖ race, ethnicity and health
 - ❖ Refugee health
 - ❖ Unions, workplaces and health
 - ❖ Indigenous health and southern imaginations (agriculture, food, environment)
- ❖ Building global partnerships for local theories (WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO)
- ❖ Extending inter-disciplinary networks, broadening the scope of questions to be asked.
- ❖ Building the global reach of CARE geographically. Asia-Pacific

“There is something else outside this that is possible.”
- Kali, 32-year-old Santali community activist