

THE GLOCAL CLASSROOM

SHARING THE COMDEV EXPERIENCE

Communication for Social and Environmental Change
Guelph, Canada, May 22-23 2014



MALMÖ UNIVERSITY

The Glocal Classroom is a collaboration between the universities of Malmö, Sweden, Flinders, Australia, Guelph, Canada, and Stellenbosch, South Africa.

The aim of the project is to bridge the existing gap between web-based learning, often understood as distance learning, and conventional forms of education on campus, by exploring innovative ways to combine the two. This will be achieved through a world series of seminars hosted by the participating universities.

The second seminar took place **22-23 May 2014** and was arranged by the **University of Guelph**. Focusing on communication for social and environmental change, the seminar was a natural transit from the first seminar on transforming education through technological innovation in Stellenbosch, 25-26 March 2014.

Watch the **recorded streams** from the seminar **here**.

“I Think it was a Fantastic Event”

The two-day seminar was filled with interesting panels, presentations and media installations. Oscar Hemer, professor and coordinator of the Communication for Development master's programme at Malmö University is one of the founders of the Glocal Classroom project:

‘A great accomplishment of this conference was that while it was focusing on the technology, the glocal classroom, it also had a very clear communication for development profile and not least the interaction with the student was very important. I enjoyed the relaxed form of the panels. It was a quite short programme, but you still got the feeling that it contained a lot’, he said.

The programme covered a wide variety of topics – from Digital Social and Environmental Change and Journalistic Frames on Representation and Globalisation to Mediated Transformations of Rural and Remote Areas of Canada and had some 30 speakers presenting their work and research.

‘I think it was a fantastic event and there was a nice flow to the sessions’, said Tobias Denskus, senior lecturer at Malmö University.

One of the stand out sessions was organised in collaboration with Guelph's Campus Community Radio Station, CFRU 93.3. The World Café On-the-Air invited five Guelph graduates to talk about and discuss their research and experiences in community radio and social change issues in a living room setting. See the full talkshow **here**.

‘I think that the World Café session was really innovative, as the radio stations often don't come into the academic institutions in a pedagogical manner and so that to me was proven a real success’, said Helen Hambly Odame, associate professor at University of Guelph, and one of the main organisers of the Guelph seminar.

All broadcasts from the Guleph seminar can be found on the **project blog**.

World Café Session On-the-Air

In May this year four ComDev students at Malmö University, including myself, got the chance to participate in person in the second seminar of the Glocal Classroom project. Hosted by the University of Guelph, the academic partners of the project, along with practitioners and students, came together to discuss issues around web-based learning in relation to Communication for Development.

At the end of the first day of the seminar, a World Café session was scheduled. We were invited to the students club of UoG, a somewhat mysterious place tucked away on the fifth floor of one of the university buildings. Those who found their way up entered a mixture of a gentlemen's club and a cozy North American living room. This unique setting only added to the anticipation of an unusual format for a seminar session.

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The session was hosted by Guelph’s Campus/Community Radio Station CFRU 93.3. A group of speakers was invited to share their knowledge regarding community radio, based on their professional, academic and personal experiences. The host and the participants engaged in a discussion around outcomes and challenges of triggering social change through the radio medium.

Having been working in a project that uses radio as a means of communication for reconciliation in a post-conflict country, I experienced the contributions as equally inspiring and thought provoking. Based on the feedback from the audience it became obvious that many others felt the same, and no doubt we walked away with new and fresh ideas.

“It was an exciting session due to its combination of being a live radio show and a visually recorded panel discussion.”

It was an exciting session due to its combination of being a live radio show and a visually recorded panel discussion. The creative format – including live music – was great to regain energy and boost concentration levels, even after a long day of discussions and presentations.



Text: Nora Wegner – student at the Communication for Development master’s programme at Malmö University



“We can do a lot more than just have a Lecture Streamed through the Online Classroom”

Helen Hambly Odame is an associate professor at University of Guelph, primarily working with the Capacity Development and Extension Programme in the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development. She was one of the people involved in organising the Guelph Seminar as part of the Glocal Classroom.

How did you feel about the conference?

Helen: “I really enjoyed hosting the Guelph seminar! We set it up with the intention of involving graduate students in the programme and many of them were present, as discussants in the presentations, involved in the poster and mini-media presentation during the breaks, and helping out throughout the event. I was particularly happy that Malmö was able to bring three graduate students and a fourth one from Canada to join us in Guelph. I feel that this interaction between our students is very important to us and the project.”

There were many practitioners in the programme, mixed with academics. How come?

Helen: “That is very typical of Canadian approaches to communication for development. It is important that what you do conceptually is also tested in the real world. We use a lot hands-on learning projects. Our students are engaged in Master of Science research work for their theses, and often with major research papers they will do a smaller study, but always some kind of action research methodology.”

I also think that the connection to our campus radio station and the World Café session was really innovative, as the radio stations often don't come into the academic institutions in a pedagogical manner and so that to me was proven a real success. I would like to try to look at this a little bit more and see how we can accredit the volunteer experience in campus community radio on the one hand, but also take content and serialise it as learning objects on the other hand. This is exciting because of the connectivity that we have, they can be turned

into learning podcasts. And the world café with our graduate students, that all had some kind of connection with radio in their work professionally or academically, really taught me a lot about students actually being able to create learning objects. How can something like a radio station really help us to do that? So some real value added to our education in ComDev I think.

I think another aspect of the conference that was important was the Human Rights angle. We often don't have Human Rights emphasised enough in ComDev work, we recognise it and it is part of the context of UN work and similar. It is particularly important when we talk about remote and rural communities, and that is very relevant to Canada where we have our First Nations communities and the rights that they are articulating and transfer now into the institutions in Canada, but also to recognise that this is a global struggle from many communities that are somehow, because they often lack information, because they lack opportunities to communicate, are not aware of their rights. A lot of examples were cited over the last couple of days that this is happening. Communities are cut off from the urban areas and are not aware of their right to land or to gender rights etc, because of their marginalisation.

“Now I realise that with things like the World Café and the panels that we had in the Guelph seminar we can do a lot more than just have a lecture streamed through the online classroom.”

Five years ago the University of Guelph and Malmö University had a similar cooperation where you hosted a seminar together online. How is this cooperation different from the one five years ago?

Helen: I think we were still experimenting with how to exchange knowledge back in the day, and we used lecture style presentations. Now I realise that with things like the World Café and the panels that we had in the Guelph seminar we can do a lot more than just have a lecture streamed through the online classroom. This is where it will be exciting and who knows, maybe down the road we will actually be in the field for these kinds of seminars. Maybe we will be with the communities in the field. That would be the next evolution of this I suppose.

“I liked how we were able to bring in the other Glocal Classroom partners speaking with us all here in Guelph, despite the time zones, crossing great distances.”

Many of the participants at the seminar showed a great interest in the Glocal Classroom project, and wanted to know how to get involved. What do you see for the future?

Helen: We are doing this on a little bit of a shoestring financially, and maybe that is a good thing, yet if you want to build more of an organisation around it, it will be more expensive, so will that defeat what we're doing? The structure and development seems fairly organic right now, I liked how we were able to bring in the partners from the other Glocal Classroom partners speaking with us all here in Guelph, despite the time zones, crossing great distances. I think that every time we meet each other in the virtual classroom context we are able to feel that our relationship is also deepening. I feel much closer to Helmi and Antoinette, and now that I've met Lauren I really feel motivated to interact with them and their students more.

Experiencing the Glocal Classroom – Online and Offline

In May 2014, I had the opportunity to participate in one of the Glocal Classroom Seminars. After nearly one semester of ComDev studies at Malmö University, this was the first time I got to meet my teachers and classmates in person.

All previous interaction had been online, through Malmö University's It's Learning portal, the Live Lecture videoconference platform, or by more traditional communication via email and Skype.

Starting with the cons for offline participation, jetlag would be the first to mention. Living in South East Asia, online participation in the previous seminars was relatively easy with just 4-5 hours time difference, which actually made combining studies with full time work easier, enabling me to participate during afternoons and evenings. But the 23 hour travel from Hanoi to Guelph surely left me dazed and confused – the burden of international cooperation that I had experienced before as well, and it never gets easier.

The pros, however, were equally dazzling. Whatever inventions made in the area of online participation, nothing really beats the old-fashioned face-to-face interaction in richness of communication. Being able to share conference room with other ComDev scholars and practitioners was enriching beyond what any online participation can offer. It also provided insights to the 'backstage' of organizing the Glocal Classroom experience, including how online presenters were integrated into the programme from various parts of the world to share their viewpoints and practical applications of Com-Dev in their work.

Besides the online/offline experience, studies have also expanded my horizons as a development practitioner. Working with UNFPA Vietnam and dealing with communications and social change issues, was my motivation to commence studies in the first place, and it has

proved very fruitful. Sometimes the academic side has felt very 'academic' compared to everyday challenges at the office, but most times the friction is enriching, providing constant reflection both for the work as well as for my studies.

Insights to other practitioners' work was the highlight for me during the Guelph seminar, and I do hope that such interaction with academics and practitioners will be an integral part of the Glocal Classroom also in the future, to truly make the ComDev community flourish.

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The benefits of combining work and studies really come alive with that interaction, sharing both theory and practical experiences makes it truly unique – be it online or offline.

I feel I am better in both worlds when I can combine the academic with practice, even though stressing at times. The opportunity to study online was key for me to even think of further studies, but the combination and flexibility that the Glocal Classroom has offered sure is a motivation to keep on doing both!



Text: Seija Anttonen – student at the Communication for Development master's programme at Malmö University



“We had the Opportunity to Interact with the Local Students”

Participating in the Glocal Classroom Project was a unique experience that allowed me to share ideas and network with a group of very motivated and talented youths and professors involved in ComDev work in many parts of the world.

During the two-day long seminar in Guelph we had the opportunity to discuss several initiatives in the field of Communication for Development. Experts shared practical experiences of the use of media and communication in their communities with us. They showcased projects from the First Nations Communities in Northern Ontario, the Fishermen Communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, and other remote areas of Canada, as well as in the Caribbean, Africa and South Asia, with different focuses; for example rural development, self-empowerment, education and advocacy.

During the breaks we had the opportunity to interact with some of the local students and realize the huge diversity of people studying at Guelph, coming from several countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. I discovered a very interesting project on Agroforestry Innovation and Rural Entrepreneurs in Makala, Democratic Republic of Congo, promoted by some of the students at the seminar, involving the recovery of fields for sustainable agricultural purposes. They presented brilliant ideas, and we were discussing how the model could be applicable in other countries, like in Cape Verde, where most of the soils are volcanic stone, and hydroponics therefore has become an alternative.

Likewise, other projects were presented, as one on HIV prevention in Trinidad and Tobago, other in Food Security in the Andean region of Peru, and other on child and youth trends. All the presenters showed great enthusiasm and motivated us to join and support them.

A very noteworthy session was the World Café, broadcasted live by the University Radio. The presenter interviewed five guests bringing to

the audiences many meaningful stories, such as the one on the program for children and youth affected by violent conflicts in Africa, presented by War Child Canada.

We also had a broad discussion on how to follow-up the Glocal Classroom project. Initially it started from a partnership among the universities of Flinders, Malmö, Guelph and Stellenbosch, organizing one seminar each during 2014. Now it is open to debate whether continue working with this model, or enlarge the group with more universities. Participants were very happy with the project and enthusiastic about strengthening the university partnerships with more activities. Some proposed to establish a formal association for cooperation among universities with an annual action plan, while others suggested to keep it as an informal network for punctual collaboration.

I am returning home not only with more knowledge about ComDev initiatives and a larger network of professional and academic contacts, but also with a real picture of the host country, Canada.



Text: Antonio Palazuelos Prieto, *student at the Communication for Development master's programme at Malmö University*



Mikael Rundberg, Antonio Palazuelos Prieto, Nora Wegner, Ronald Stade, Tobias Denskus, Maureen, Hans Lindqvist, Seija Orvokki Anttonen, Michael Krona and Oscar Hemer.

A big thanks to Guelph University for a fantastic event!

– *The Malmö University Crew*

Text and photo: Rebecca Bengtsson

Layout: Ulrica Kristhammar

www.glocalclassroom.wordpress.com