

## THE FILIPINOS AND THE PHILIPPINES IN NORA CRUZ QUEBRAL'S DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION DISCOURSE: STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION'S GROUNDEDNESS IN A NATION'S CONTEXT

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### ABSTRACT

*The very first definition of development communication (DevCom) was articulated in 1971 by Nora Cruz Quebral. Since then, DevCom has continually flourished in the Philippines and its Asian neighbours as a field of study and practice. Quebral, a Filipina, is now widely recognised as one of the pillars and leading scholars of DevCom in Asia and the whole world. But how exactly has Quebral invested the Filipinos and the Philippines with meanings in her discourse of DevCom as a field of study and practice purportedly grounded in the context of developing nations and communities, and what are its implications? Informed and guided by Laclau and Mouffe's Theory of Discourse, this paper identifies Quebral's key articulations of DevCom, the Filipinos and the Philippines in her discourse, and discusses some implications of the discourse for the scholarship and practice of DevCom. It concludes that Quebral's DevCom discourse argues that differences in socio-economic experiences among nations have necessitated the rise of another field of communication more appropriate for and grounded in the realities of developing nations and communities. However, the discourse could have also articulated the field of DevCom more in relation to the historical, political, cultural and ethnolinguistic experiences of a developing nation and its people—in this study,*

*that of the Philippines and the Filipinos. What has been barely articulated in the discourse has important implications for DevCom scholarship and practice.*

**Keywords:** Development communication, Nora C. Quebral, Filipino, Philippines, discourse theory

## INTRODUCTION

The intellectualisation of communication as a discipline has produced various discourses on communication as a transformative force that can change human lives and societies for the better. These discourses go beyond describing and explaining how communication occurs and makes social life possible. They advance propositions that emphasise the transformative capacity of communication, especially given the widespread social realities of poverty, inequality, oppression, discrimination and exclusion. Development communication (DevCom) is a product of these discourses as it views communication both as a basic social process and as a strong social force that can help facilitate the development of society.

The practice of DevCom in various parts of the world actually predates its intellectualisation in the academe as a field of study (Manyozo 2012). Communication initiatives aimed at transforming the lives of poor people had long been practiced before the term *development communication* was coined and first defined by Nora Cruz Quebral in 1971 (Bessette 2006; Manyozo 2012). Early scholars and practitioners talked and wrote about the practice without labelling it as DevCom or other names signifying a field of communication with a transformative view (Gumucio-Dagron and Tufté 2006). At the end of the 20th century, the practice, as well as its scholarship, was already known by different names, somehow reflecting how it developed in and addressed different social contexts and how it became varied in focus, emphasis and scope (Melkote and Steeves 2001).

Nowadays, DevCom is largely equated to “communication for development” (C4D), “communication for social change” (CFSC), and “media, communication and development” (MCD) (Manyozo 2012: xvii). Despite this equivalence, it is widely acknowledged that the academic intellectualisation and institutionalisation of DevCom began and flourished in the Philippines for various reasons. First, the one who coined the term “development communication” and the first academic to formulate a definition of it as a field of study and practice was Quebral, a Filipina (Bessette 2006: 28; Librero 2008: 9; Manyozo 2006: 80).

Second, the first undergraduate and graduate degree programs in DevCom were instituted in the Philippines (Librero 2012; Quebral 1975b), specifically at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) which now has a full-fledged College of Development Communication. The significance of this institutionalisation is underscored by the fact that, as Latin American C4D/CFSC scholar Gumucio-Dagron (2001: 9) notes, “Among thousands of academic institutions that produce journalists, only a very few offer training for people interested in communication for development.”

Third, the rich history of DevCom in the Philippines attests to how the field has continually grown and matured as a social science with a strong institutional base and a growing number of scholars and practitioners since 1971. It also provides a strong argument for the critical contributions of Filipino scholars led by Quebral to the rise and advancement of DevCom as a field of study and practice. These scholars saw the need for a field of communication that could address the situations and problems of developing nations, such as the Philippines, which are in many ways different from the traditionally powerful nations of the West. In this sense, there has been an acknowledgement of the need for groundedness of communication projects in the social realities of developing nations since the beginning. These social realities are also diverse, and the different DevCom schools of thought that have risen in different parts of the world reflect this diversity.

A scholar of MCD, Manyozo (2012) calls the field of DevCom that has grown in the Philippines as the Los Baños school of thought. He contends that “the School’s pioneering reflexive, method-driven and theory-based nature of devcom practice was very original and defined the shape of global discourse, practice and training in devcom” (Manyozo 2006: 95). Until recently, however, the Los Baños school was rarely recognised in Western literature as a pioneer in DevCom and so were other similar schools of thought that emerged in the developing world.

Manyozo (2006, 2012) also laments how the Western literature on DevCom neglected in the past the theory and praxis of DevCom that emerged in Asia, Africa and Latin America. To him, “the achievements of Third World development communication scholars” like Quebral were ignored before because of the “inability of Western scholars to understand or learn of global developments in the field” during much of the 20th century (Manyozo 2006: 86). Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte (2006) share the same sentiment regarding the voices of scholars from North America and Europe dominating the earliest years of C4D despite the significant contributions of scholars from Asia and Latin America. Manyozo (2006: 85) goes further and asserts that it is

Quebral, not Everett Rogers, who should have been honoured as the “father of development communication.”

Aside from Quebral, there are many other Filipinos who have become important actors in the growth of the field, as follows: the DevCom scholars at the College of Development Communication, especially the field's forerunners; the DevCom practitioners in government and nongovernment agencies and organisations and their allies; and the multitude of people in various marginalised sectors in the Philippines. Their country, as one of the developing nations for which DevCom has been intellectualised as a field of study and in which it has been applied as a field of practice, has indeed provided a critical historical and immediate social context in which DevCom has grown and flourished. But how have the scholars of DevCom, especially Quebral, articulated the Philippines and the Filipinos in their discourses?

This paper revisits the discourse of Quebral as a scholar who has immense influence on the Los Baños school of thought in DevCom and draws insights for the rethinking of and theorising in the field in the context of a developing nation and its people—the Philippines and the Filipinos in this case. In doing so, it explores other ways by which the field she has helped shape and championed may be rethought and strengthened. Quebral's definitions of DevCom have been widely quoted in and outside the Philippines, but her discourse of DevCom itself has never been examined for its implications, especially for DevCom practice and theorising in her own country. As a distinct field of communication, DevCom has been conceptualised to be more appropriate and grounded in the context of developing nations and communities. This paper also offers insights that other DevCom scholars may find useful in grounding DevCom in their own countries and challenges them to embrace and strengthen a more grounded DevCom for their own people.

The specific objectives of the paper were the following: (1) determine Quebral's key articulations of DevCom in her discourse of the field; (2) identify key articulations of the Filipinos and the Philippines in her DevCom discourse; and (3) explain the implications of the discourse for Devcom scholarship and praxis, with emphasis on DevCom's groundedness and alternative dimension. It focused on Quebral from among several Filipino DevCom scholars for reasons already explained above.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **DevCom as a Field of Study and Practice in the Philippines**

Quebral presented and explained the first definition<sup>1</sup> of DevCom in a symposium on agricultural development at the College of Agriculture (CA), University of the Philippines (UP) in 1971, describing DevCom as a distinct field of communication that aims to “promote social equality and the unfolding of human potential” and has “bias for the poor who make up the majority in any developing country” (Quebral 1988: 28). Her seminal paper on DevCom in 1971 was a landmark in the academic intellectualisation and institutionalisation of a field different from those with which it was often confused, like agricultural journalism, mass communication and extension education.

As an academic program, DevCom has its roots in agricultural communications, which was one of the major areas of the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture program of the UP-CA from 1962 to 1973 (Librero 2008: 6–8). On March 11, 1974, the newly established University Council of the now autonomous constituent unit of UP, named UPLB, approved in its second meeting the first undergraduate degree program in DevCom—the Bachelor of Science in Development Communication (BSDC) (Quebral 1975b: 25). Since then, DevCom has continued carving a place for itself in the academe, especially after several other higher education institutions (HEI) in the Philippines started offering DevCom programs. In UPLB, the DevCom degree-granting unit started as a department, which was later elevated into an institute in 1987 and a college in 1998.

The College of Development Communication has already been recognised thrice as a centre of excellence by the Philippine Commission on Higher Education. Its BSDC program has also been accredited by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations University Network since 2014. Some of its graduates have helped establish degree programs in DevCom and many have been teaching DevCom courses in other HEIs in the Philippines. At least one course on DevCom is taken by students of the Bachelor of Arts in Communication program in the country. As of 2018, 24 state and three private HEIs in the Philippines have undergraduate DevCom programs. In addition to BSDC, UPLB has also been offering masteral and doctoral degree programs in DevCom.

Like in other parts of the world, the practice of DevCom in the Philippines has preceded an academic field on it. While the term DevCom was coined and defined by Quebral in the academe in 1971, DevCom practice started to take shape and grow in the Philippines much earlier—in the 1950s, with Quebral as one of the prime movers (Manyozo 2006: 79). Librero (2008: 5) shares that the first DevCom scholars from UP-CA were tasked to “prepare popular articles and extension materials such as leaflets and brochures designed to teach farmers modern farming practices.”

Today, many government institutions in the Philippines have communication units that practice DevCom and hire DevCom graduates. Other DevCom professionals also work in nongovernment organisations, mass media companies and international agencies that have development-oriented programs. Most, if not all, of them know who Quebral is.

### **Nora Cruz Quebral as the “Mother” of DevCom**

Nora Cruz Quebral is known as the founder of DevCom in the Philippines and a highly regarded forerunner of the field in Asia and the world. She finished BA in English at UP in 1950, MS in Agricultural Journalism at the University of Wisconsin, United States in 1957, and PhD in Communication at the University of Illinois, United States in 1966 (Cadiz 2006a).

Since 1971, she has redefined DevCom twice and her three definitions have been widely discussed in many colleges and universities in Asia that have academic programs in DevCom. Her seminal ideas on the field have influenced many other scholars, educators and practitioners in the Philippines and other countries.

Quebral also had a critical role in the establishment in the 1960s of an academic department on agricultural communication, which was later reorganised into the first DevCom department. The reorganisation was due to the realisation that farmers and other people in marginalised sectors were also facing development issues other than agriculture (Cadiz 2006a). According to Cadiz (2006b: para. 6), the institutional history of DevCom at UPLB is “in a large part the history of Nora’s career in the academe, along with that of the development communication program and its practice at Los Baños.”

In 2011, Quebral was conferred an honorary degree by the London School of Economics and Political Science for her intellectual contributions to DevCom, especially in carving a place for DevCom in social science (Journal of Development Communication 2011).

## **Exploring Quebral’s Discursive Construction of the Filipinos and the Philippines**

At the outset, Quebral (1975a) propounded the idea that DevCom was more of a “Third World phenomenon” distinct from other communication fields that “took root and matured in the West in answer to the special needs of that society” (3). She later said that it was appropriate for all developing communities, including those experiencing various forms of poverty in the West.

Quebral has since maintained that DevCom concepts and principles can help address poverty anywhere, but she has been cognisant nonetheless that diversity exists among developing nations and communities. To her, DevCom should be “firmly anchored to the struggle in the grassroots” (Quebral 1988: 12), not detached from the realities of people it intends to serve. Even her discussions of various DevCom concepts and principles have unavoidably touched on the realities of her countrymen in their own country, making them an essential part of her DevCom discourse.

How then are the Filipinos and the Philippines, as entities of the developing world, articulated in the DevCom discourse of Quebral? What are not articulated in the discourse? What are the implications of Quebral’s discourse for DevCom scholarship and practice that is grounded in the contexts of developing nations such as the Philippines?

### **THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ANCHOR**

This paper is the first attempt to analyse the writings of Quebral using discourse theory and method. It is specifically informed by the poststructuralist Theory of Discourse of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. According to Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 6, 12), the theory is “a theoretical and methodological whole” and builds primarily on the poststructuralist proposition that “discourse constructs the social world in meaning.” A discourse endeavours to crystallise or naturalise the meanings of signs, but it can never completely do so. As such, while the social realities produced by a discourse through its meaning-making processes appear fixed and natural, they are never permanent and have possibilities of changing.

Discourse works through discursive practice, which “is a social practice that shapes the social world” and influences how people construct and act on social realities, including truths and commonplace behaviour (Jorgensen

and Phillips 2002: 18). A hegemonic discourse is one that has succeeded in constructing seemingly fixed meanings of objects at a particular period of time. In the case of DevCom in the Philippines, it is largely Quebral's discourse that has set in motion, shaped and kept up the struggle for creating and recreating meanings that have laid down the foundations and constructed the identity of the field.

Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory has a "broad focus" (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 24), but some of its propositions and concepts informed how this paper was framed and how the texts produced by Quebral were analysed.

First, a discourse is the "structured totality resulting from" articulatory practice (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105). Each discourse represents a set of knowledge claims or understanding of the world, interacts and struggles with other discourses, and produces and reproduces certain social realities. Hence, the DevCom discourse of Quebral has its own propositions on certain aspects of social realities that have interpellated the Filipinos and the Philippines in some subject positions. Through the years, the social realities constructed by her discourse have gained wider acceptance and partial crystallisation among DevCom scholars, practitioners and allies. One of the consequences of her DevCom discourse in the Philippines, for instance, is its big influence on the institutionalisation, teaching and practice of DevCom in UPLB and other universities.

Second, the relations among linguistic signs are constituted in the discursive practice of "articulation" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105). The articulatory practice tries to fix meanings in favour of the knowledge claims forwarded by a discourse. However, the meaning ascribed to a sign in a discourse may change in each articulation since there are always "meaning potentials" or "possibilities of meaning" (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 27, 29). Quebral's written statements or expressions on DevCom are her articulations of the field. As discursive practice, an articulation may be verbal or written, or in the form of social action (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 29). In this paper, the specific sources of articulations are Quebral's publications, each of which was produced by Quebral's articulatory practice as she was formulating, modifying and advancing certain propositions on DevCom.

Third, a discourse tries to create, unify and naturalise its own system of meanings by strengthening the relationship among specific signs while displacing to the field of discursivity possible meanings that threaten it. Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 112) explain that "any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity." In other words, "the field of discursivity is a reservoir for the 'surplus of meaning' produced by the



articulatory practice—that is, the meanings that each sign has, or has had, in other discourses, but which are excluded by” a discourse (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 27). In Quebral’s DevCom discourse, what other or different meanings of DevCom, the Filipinos and the Philippines has she excluded or “arrested” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112) in the field of discursivity?

Informed by the abovementioned propositions and concepts, this paper examined the writings of Quebral; “explored patterns in and across” (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 21) her specific articulations of DevCom to surface her key articulations of the field, the Filipinos and the Philippines; and determined the implications of these articulations. Two of its important conceptual and analytical tools were used in the analysis: articulation and field of discursivity, as explained below.

In the analysis of data, the following steps were followed: (1) read Quebral’s publications and other papers containing all her articulations; (2) reread her texts to identify patterns of articulations involving the linguistic signs; (3) surface her key articulations of DevCom, the Filipinos and the Philippines through “themeing the data,” in which “recurrent” and “patterned” meanings were identified and used to form “overarching” or “integrative” themes (Saldaña 2009: 139–140); (4) reread the texts to check if the knowledge claims on the key articulations of DevCom, the Filipinos and the Philippines were coherently surfaced from the data; (5) reflected on the implications of the discourse’s key articulations and its field of discursivity for DevCom scholarship and practice.

In the context of this paper, articulations are Quebral’s statements on or related to DevCom, the Filipinos and the Philippines. Each of her statements is an articulation because it puts together linguistic signs in ways through which they construct meanings that shape her discourse. Key articulations are the main ideas and arguments surfaced from the relationships among and patterns of meanings in Quebral’s specific articulations through “themeing the data” (Saldaña 2009: 139–140). Laclau and Mouffe (1985) neither talk about key articulations nor discuss any tools to determine which among the articulations in a discourse make up its main arguments. Therefore, this paper deviates from Laclau and Mouffe at this methodological juncture, seeing it fit to identify key articulations that embody the main propositions or arguments of the discourse. As Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 8) observe, Laclau and Mouffe’s theory is “short on specific methodological guidelines and illustrative examples.” The field of discursivity of Quebral’s DevCom discourse refers to the potential meanings left out, ignored or repressed by the discourse as it tries to strengthen its propositions on DevCom through its articulations.

The sources of data analysed for this paper were the following, all written by Quebral and published from 1971 to 2014: one book on DevCom, five chapters in a book, three monographs, two primers, six journal articles, and six workshop and seminar papers.

Since this paper is informed by the Discourse Theory, which draws from a social constructionist epistemology, its knowledge claims cannot be said objective and definite. Nonetheless, there was a conscious effort from the author to observe some measures of trustworthiness in the process of surfacing knowledge claims. Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 21) explain that in discourse analysis, “it is fruitful to try to distance oneself from one’s material.” Hence, the author’s prior knowledge and beliefs about DevCom were held. There were also attempts to check if the knowledge claims did not mirror the author’s personal views about DevCom.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This part of the paper presents in four sections Quebral’s DevCom discourse, specifically its key articulations of DevCom, the Filipinos and the Philippines, and the implications of the discourse. First, Quebral’s key articulations of DevCom are discussed. These form the core arguments of Quebral on DevCom as a distinct field of study and practice of communication. Second, how the Filipinos and the Philippines figure in the discourse is explained. This gives light to the question of how DevCom is grounded in the realities of a developing nation and its people, with the Philippines and the Filipinos as the featured case. Third, the field of discursivity of the discourse and its implications for DevCom scholarship and praxis are unraveled. This section interrogates the discourse in terms of what it has overlooked that could have strengthened the key premises of Quebral on DevCom as a distinct field that befit the context of developing nations and communities beset by poverty. Fourth, the implications of both the discourse and its field of discursivity for theorising in DevCom are presented.

### **Quebral’s Key Articulations: Main Propositions on DevCom**

The writings of Quebral are discursive texts that have constructed her articulations of DevCom, the Filipinos and the Philippines. What exactly does Quebral’s DevCom discourse propound in the first place? This section addresses this question. Quebral’s key articulations of DevCom are essentially the main propositions of her discourse of the field, and as such, they embody

her arguments on why it is appropriate—and more importantly, grounded—in the context of developing nations and communities. These are claims on what sets DevCom apart from other fields. These signify, albeit implicitly, that the groundedness of DevCom entails an in-depth understanding of the context of the people for which and the nation in which it operates. In addition, these have implications for theorising in DevCom.

What then are Quebral’s key articulations of DevCom which serve as her main propositions about it?

First, DevCom is a distinct branch or field of communication. Quebral (1988: 66) claims that DevCom “may well be the branch of communication education in Asia that has broken more new ground than any other.” She believes that it is relevant not only to the Philippines but also to every developing nation and community, which needs a field of communication more suited to its development situation.

In integrating communication and development in one field, Quebral (1988) contends that the former is integral to the process and materialisation of the latter. The facilitative power of communication can help people, especially those in developing nations who are experiencing poverty, realise their potentials and improve their lives; hence, the need for a kind of communication that can hone and unleash this power. It is clear that Quebral’s DevCom discourse advances a transformative view of communication.

In Quebral’s DevCom discourse, in general, communication refers to the “fundamental human process” (Quebral 1985b: 26) that “permeates a society” and can facilitate development (Quebral 1988: 158). As a linguistic sign in the discourse, it is also invested with meanings as a discipline to which DevCom belongs. Quebral (1988: 6) says DevCom is a “speciali[s]ed branch in the family tree of the communication discipline.”

Second, “development” is the “weightier” between the two words that comprise the name of the field (Quebral 2002a: 18, 2012a: 10). To Quebral (1988: 5), it is the “cutting edge of the two-fold idea of development communication.”

Development is viewed as the context where meaningful and relevant communication happens among community people and which informs how communication must happen. This context sets DevCom apart from other fields of communication. While the basic concepts and principles of DevCom come from both “development theory and communication theory” (Quebral 1988: 68), it is development that “sets the goal and provides the message,” and “colourises the communication process” (Quebral 2002a: 18).

In Quebral's discourse, development is generally the transformation from poverty to a better state. However, the emphasis on what should be prioritised in this transformation has evolved in her three definitions of DevCom—primarily economic in the first definition,<sup>1</sup> socio-economic in the second,<sup>2</sup> and then self-determined by communities in the third.<sup>3</sup> The shifts in emphasis have reflected the global changes in and dynamics of development discourses through the years, from modernisation to critical and liberation perspectives.

The writings of Quebral drew heavily from the dominant modernisation paradigm of development at the outset. It is worth pointing out that it was in the context of the hegemony of the discourse of development as modernisation in the 1960s and 1970s that DevCom was conceived and inaugurated as an academic field at UPLB. As Roman (2005: 315) contends, DevCom “was born out of a specific conception of development ingrained in a particular historical conjuncture: the modernisation paradigm and the start of the Cold War.” But Quebral has also tried integrating in her discourse various notions of development from other discourses (i.e., multiplicity or another development, sustainable development, participatory development) since the 1980s. She has gradually embraced a view of development as one that unfolds through multiple processes and has different directions in different communities, and one in which community people determine and decide on the process and direction of development through education, dialogue and collective action.

Third, DevCom must be viewed as “communication in development,” not “communication for development” (Cadiz 2006a: para. 19). By this, Quebral means communication should be regarded as a constitutive process of development, not separate from it. The fallout from the use of the preposition *for* is communication being treated only as a tool or as secondary to development and other fields (Quebral 1975c, 1985b). In an articulation, Quebral points out that when communication is seen as “message carrier for other fields, it tends to be treated as a handmaiden rather than as a partner” (Quebral 1985b: 25); ergo, communication loses its worth as the basic human process that gives life to social interaction, interconnection and action. She disputes the prevalent perception of communication as merely media products that transmit certain messages.

The fourth key articulation of Quebral's discourse is the assertion that DevCom is not centred or dependent on media, but on people. Unlike mass communication, DevCom uses all appropriate means of communication, mediated or not, to help raise the quality of life of people. This alone already

answers the question raised by some scholars (e.g., Labor 2017) on the difference between DevCom and mass communication. Quebral (1988: 140) elaborates that interpersonal or face-to-face communication is often more relevant and powerful than media in areas where the “need for development is greatest.” In agricultural communities, for instance, interpersonal channels and group methods must be prioritised over mass media, which may take the “support role,” in teaching complex concepts to farmers (Quebral 2002b: 51).

Quebral’s three definitions of DevCom make no mention of media. However, media is an important linguistic sign in her DevCom discourse because of her persistent attempts to contest the commonplace view that communication is chiefly about media. This resolve to decentre media in the public discourse of communication does not mean she downplays media’s roles and importance in development and DevCom (Quebral 1986a). Her critique of media is largely about what she regards as its misuse or misapplication in developing nations (e.g., concentration in urban areas, low priority given to rural people and their problems). To Quebral (1988), if media is to be used in development, its program must target specific groups or communities to be relevant; its orientation should be non-commercial and its content and strategies must focus not only on entertainment and general information but also on nonformal education; and its location should preferably be in areas where it is really needed.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Quebral (2008, 2011, 2012a, 2012b) has articulated more about the increasing potentials of new information and communication technologies, especially digital ones, in increasing people’s opportunities for dialogue, participation and organisation. Nevertheless, she is still convinced that community media are more apt for dialogue and relevant to rural development as far as mediated communication is concerned. Likewise, she still puts people, not media, at the centre of DevCom.

Fifth, DevCom sides with people experiencing poverty and aims to help them realise their potentials and improve their living conditions. People are at the centre of Quebral’s DevCom discourse, as she has advanced a field of communication for human beings.

In Quebral’s three definitions of DevCom,<sup>1-3</sup> the phrase “human communication” consistently appears. In one particular paper, Quebral (1988: 22) categorically explains that the “people” in DevCom are primarily the “majority for whom the right to speak is empty because poverty, ignorance, illiteracy and isolation have muted their voices.” She has not changed her position since 1971 that one of the attributes of DevCom that makes it different

from other communication fields is its “bias” or “allegiance” to the “poor, the powerless and the disadvantaged in any developing society” (Quebral 1988: 28; Quebral 2012a: 7). She has always maintained that DevCom should focus on developing and enriching the capabilities of people to become in charge of their lives and overcome various forms of poverty.

In Quebral’s DevCom discourse, poverty is the state and experience of deprivation where social and economic adversities prevail, making it hard for people in this situation—basically, the poor—to survive or live a decent life. She has characterised poverty mainly in terms of who the poor are and what socio-economic difficulties they face, often pointing out that most developing nations are beset by similar development barriers found in the Philippines.

To Quebral, DevCom’s mission is to help people in poverty facilitate any progressive changes in their own lives and communities through communication. The first two definitions of DevCom by Quebral clearly articulate the supposed “transformation” from less to more desirable social and economic conditions (Quebral 1988: 147; Quebral 2002a: 16). The third definition uses “transitioning” instead of “transformation” to refer to the progress “from proverty in all its forms to an overall growth” (Quebral 2012a: 9), including both “material” and “nonmaterial” growth (Quebral 2002a: 21–22).

Sixth, DevCom has a crucial role in ensuring that appropriate and relevant information reaches those who need it, especially the poor who may benefit much from it. Quebral is firm in her assertion that the poor majority in developing nations lacks information necessary for transforming lives. In her articulations, Quebral (2002a) emphasises that pertinent information transformed into knowledge can help poor people better their lives. She says that it can nurture them to become more politically mature and capable of self-governance; improve their income, health and education; overcome illiteracy; cultivate interaction among rural dwellers and connect them to decision centres; and form and sustain local organisations to broaden their political and economic power (Quebral 1988).

On the kind of information that must be shared, her bias is for scientific information produced by experts, researchers or scientists (Quebral 1987). To connect the users of information to the producers or sources of it, she says that DevCom should serve as the link or provide opportunities for information sharing.

Seventh, the approach of DevCom is participatory. Quebral (2006: 37) even claims that DevCom and people participation are inherently interconnected, as she writes that the “participatory character of development communication

has always been considered a given in most of South[e]ast Asia.” To her, the development process must be participatory or should involve the active participation of community people. This is a belief that Quebral has held and enriched since the late 1970s, perhaps even before Freire’s groundbreaking book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* became available to the scholars of the Los Baños school of DevCom (Manyozo 2006).

Quebral (1988: 8) subscribes to the idea that people are neither passive receivers of information nor unsuspecting actors in development programs, so “linear and top-down modes of communication” are largely ineffective. She maintains that the absence of active participation from people does not result in meaningful change.

Eighth, development communicators refer to those who consciously and systematically apply or facilitate planned communication in development programs, projects or activities. They understand concepts, principles and issues in development and communication, know well the subject matter they communicate about, and have skills in media (Quebral 1985b). Quebral (1997: 8) stresses that development communicators are not merely informants or interpreters, but more importantly, they are mediators, facilitators and consensus builders “whether through media or face-to-face situations.” She also disputes the generalisation that development communicators are simply “information officers in government development agencies” (Quebral 1985a: 14–15).

Ninth, the topics and issues that DevCom focuses on are those close to or directly affecting the poor and the disadvantaged. These topics include, but are not limited to the following: agriculture, food production and security; health, nutrition and family planning; agrarian reform; relevant education; gender equality; cooperatives and other farm organisations; and the environment, including natural resources management, conservation and global warming (Quebral 1975c, 2006; Quebral and Gomez 1976).

### **The Filipinos: Rich in Experience of Poverty and Adversity**

The most conspicuous and crystallised meanings of Filipinos in Quebral’s DevCom discourse have to do with their experience of poverty and adversity. This is one of the main reasons why she argues for the need for DevCom in the first place.

The first key articulation of the Filipinos by Quebral is that majority of them are poor in terms of socio-economic standards. Among the poor, majority are farmers, fishermen, underemployed workers or jobless individuals who

reside in rural areas with undeveloped or underdeveloped infrastructures (Quebral 1988). The condition of being poor has concomitant dilemma like lack of sources of livelihood (e.g., land) and opportunities, as well as lack of access to basic social services; vulnerability to various forms of human exploitation or abuse and natural disasters; and a web of interconnected difficulties such as unemployment, insufficient food and clothing, inadequate housing, poor health and sanitation, and lack of education (Quebral 1988, 2008).

In 1987, Quebral wrote that the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) for 1987–1992 listed “anew the most vulnerable groups: the upland and lowland farmers, agricultural wage earners, artisanal fishermen, and the urban poor. Cited in other pages are the women... Most of them live in rural areas” (Quebral 1988: 73). Many children in poor areas are also suffering from illnesses, dying early, and forced to work (Quebral 1988).

Second, majority of the Filipinos have inadequate access to information appropriate and beneficial to them. Many of them are barely, if not at all, heard because of their poverty, illiteracy and isolation. Community media, which can provide better information that they can readily understand, are often “ignored by advertisers” and receive little incentives from the government (Quebral 1988: 81). In relation to information, Quebral (1982, 1988) also claims that Filipinos rarely obtain relevant information from mass media (except for radio) that they can actually use in their daily life; they are influenced more if information is shared to them face-to-face; and their main sources of information in the 1970s and 1980s were extension workers, other knowledgeable individuals and radio.

Third, poor Filipinos, especially those in rural areas, do not have much “economic and political power to break loose” from poverty (Quebral 1988: 119). This is largely intertwined with the rural poor’s difficult socio-economic conditions and lack of access to relevant information. To “break out of their confines” and become empowered, they need not only technical and nontechnical knowledge but also assistance in addressing inhibiting factors such as “unjust tenurial systems, unequal allocation of political power, weak market structures” and illiteracy (Quebral 1988: 125–126).

Fourth, Filipino scholars of development are confronted with limitations in writing about the kind of development suited for the Philippine society. They are limited in number and most of them are busy earning a living in a country where salary rates are low. The sad implication, Quebral (1988) notes, is that Western thoughts have dominated higher educational institutions. She also deems necessary for Filipinos to produce theories and research literature on the social realities of the country.



Fifth, the poor Filipinos are the priority of DevCom in the Philippines. It is they who deal with and endure difficulties in many aspects of their social and economic life. In spite of this, they “remain active agents” and are persevering as they take actions on issues that directly concern them, with or without support from the government (Quebral 1988: 14).

### **The Philippines: Beset with Problematic Third World Complexities**

In sum, Quebral’s discourse has created representations of the Philippines as a developing nation battling poverty primarily in rural areas. The complexity of poverty, which is said to be both the cause and effect of underdevelopment, is apparent as it is interwoven with diverse societal problems in the country.

Quebral’s first key articulation of the Philippines is the affirmation of its existence as a developing nation with the majority of its population combating various aspects of socio-economic and other difficulties that are more noticeable in rural areas. What are these difficulties which are often lumped together as the tandem of poverty and inequality? According to Quebral (2008: 179), poverty “is tied not only to sparse incomes but also to such collaterals as poor health, illiteracy and lack of access to basic services.” In addition, it cannot be separated from natural calamities (e.g., earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, typhoons) and man-made ones (e.g., flooding, pollution, political repression) (Quebral 2008). She thinks that poverty in Asia, including the Philippines, is made complicated by remnants of colonial and feudal structures and exacerbated by a dictatorial or authoritarian government (Quebral 1992, 2012b).

Second, the problems of underdevelopment in the country are numerous, complicated and persistent. Quebral (1988: 73) mentions some of these in her reaction to the MTPDP of then Philippine President Corazon C. Aquino, writing that “the country’s deep-seated problems” include “persistence of poverty and income inequality, high unemployment and underemployment, urban-rural and regional disparities.”

Third, the Philippines, like many other developing nations, has implemented economic reforms anchored on free trade (e.g., liberalisation, privatisation, deregulation), which has not helped the country much in reducing poverty. Quebral (2008: 179) is skeptical about how “most Asian countries explicitly push economic goals before implicitly attending to the others.” While she is not cynical of globalisation, which is closely interwoven with free trade, she worries about how it has adversely affected local communities and homegrown industries (Quebral 2002a) and “spawned diasporas, outsourcing,

and a new occupational class of caregivers, most of whom are Asian women” (Quebral 2008: 180).

Fourth, the Philippines has a system of communication that barely bolsters development, especially in the countryside. The system is largely urban-based and media-centric, predominantly owned by traditional oligarchs, and often geared towards mass dissemination of information. Quebral (1985a: 18) notes that “news about and for the cities dominate the national media.” She criticises the lack of funding priority given to the use of media in rural development, especially for nonformal education, and the commercial media’s preoccupation with “entertainment and profit” (Quebral 1988: 38). Quebral (1988: 79–80) also claims that broadcast stations supervised by the government are purportedly airing “so-called propaganda,” while those managed by universities in various regions for their extension programs have “weak signals” and “tiny budgets.” She adds that newspapers are circulated more in urban areas and cater more to “AB readers” with their use of the English language (Quebral 1988: 33). Except for radio, which promoted rural development in much of the latter half of the 20th century, “media in developing countries today are not in synch with development” (Quebral 1988: 70). Media’s saving grace, Quebral supposes, is its adherence to and practice of the freedom of communication and expression, except during the Marcos Martial Law years.

Fifth, communication education, research and practice in the Philippines have been strongly influenced by the West. Quebral (1988: 63) explains that the influence of “American communication education and literature on Asian teachers seems to be too powerful to overcome.” Hence, the conventions of media research are “indiscriminately borrowed” by Third World scholars from Americans (Quebral 1990: 26).

Furthermore, Quebral (1988: 64) says that “much of Asian communication research remains true to its American origin in the choice of problems and methodologies,” producing more media-centric and quantitative studies and reproducing inappropriate “non-Asian assumptions.” She even thinks that DevCom educators also “rely too much in imported materials and methods” (Quebral 1988: 66). Quebral (1988: 9) also regrets that universities that offer communication programs “perpetuate the mass media fallacy,” which puts media, not process, at the centre of communication programs.

Sixth, the Philippines does not yet have the physical and social structures that can encourage people to participate in building a progressive community.

## **Field of Discursivity of Quebral’s Discourse: Implications for the Study and Practice of DevCom**

It could be gleaned from the discussions above that Quebral’s key articulations of DevCom support her claim that this field of communication distinctly addresses the situations and needs of developing nations and communities. Most of these key articulations suggest that DevCom is ideally grounded in the social and cultural contexts in which it is practiced. However, not much has been articulated about the socio-economic and cultural, much more the historical and political, structures and practices of marginalisation which are deeply intertwined with communication and development processes. The discourse could have explored these more, as Quebral herself believes that people should have economic, social, political and cultural “independence at the same time” (Quebral 1988: 22).

Moreover, her articulations of the Filipinos and the Philippines in her DevCom discourse are wanting in spite of the rich history of DevCom in the country, the pivotal role of Filipino scholars in its institutionalisation and growth, and the contextual significance of the country and its people in her discourse. What has been articulated about the Filipinos and the Philippines revolves more around their experience in poverty such as their challenging social and economic predicaments, relationship to communication and media infrastructure and system, and potentials and prospects for transformation for the better. A more in-depth examination and more substantive articulations of the Filipinos and the Philippines may provide a more concrete example of and a stronger argument for what DevCom is as a field that befits developing nations and communities. This also makes theorising in DevCom closer to the diverse realities of the people it professes to serve.

This section of the paper focuses on what has been overlooked by Quebral’s DevCom discourse that could have bolstered DevCom’s distinct identity as a field of study and practice of communication that is grounded in the realities of a developing nation or community and its people. The discussions above have already revealed what the DevCom discourse of Quebral is explicit about. But what meaning potentials are never or barely articulated by Quebral that could have, as this paper argues, fortified the cornerstones of DevCom as field of communication appropriate for developing nations and their people in their own local and national contexts? This paper identifies five meaning potentials in the field of discursivity of Quebral’s DevCom discourse that are critical to DevCom. Further, it situates these meaning potentials in the social realities of the Filipinos and the Philippines, which cannot be divorced from the DevCom discourse that they are part of.

First, Quebral's discourse is silent on local or indigenous notions of development and communication, the two most important linguistic signs in her discourse. For instance, how do Filipinos view *kaunlaran*, a Filipino concept of progress, throughout their history? How does this view of *kaunlaran* inform the formulation of goals and principles of DevCom programs?

After decades of being bombarded by development concepts from the West, it is perhaps time for Filipino DevCom scholars to rediscover indigenous notions of *kaunlaran* of the various ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines. The same goes for how Filipinos understand and perform *talastasan*, which may loosely be translated in English as communication but which is culturally different from it (Maggay 2002). Quebral (1988: 71) herself notes that in DevCom research, "the social process under study cannot be abstracted from the culture in which it occurs." However, she has not elaborated much on this, and DevCom scholars have seemingly overlooked *kaunlaran* and *talastasan* as local cultural phenomena in which DevCom programs could be grounded.

Second, the historical and political roots of the socio-economic difficulties faced by those in poverty are barely explored in the discourse in relation to development, communication and DevCom. The discourse has reproduced much of what the hegemonic modernisation paradigm has enumerated as both causes and effects of poverty in and outside the country. If development is the heftier of the two terms constituting the field, then an analysis of what causes poverty, which is development's biggest stumbling block, should go beyond the usual suspects blamed such as lack of education and illiteracy, inadequate infrastructures of all sort, remoteness, and lack of access to many things.

For instance, where are the government and the ruling elite in the underdevelopment equation in the Philippines? To be fair, Quebral (1988) has some articulations on the shortcomings of the Philippine government, rampant social inequality, lack of political power by the grassroots, and profit-orientation of private media owners. She has also discussed corruption in government vis-à-vis values formation (Quebral 2012a). But how and why the politicians and the elite in the country are related to the construction of modern poverty in the country could have been analysed more. In general, the discourse has much to say about what has caused poverty, but it is relatively clammed up on the whos, hows and whys of it in the context of history and political economy.

It would probably be interesting for a DevCom scholar to know the history of how the ruling political dynasties in the Philippines emerged during the Spanish and American colonial eras, and how they have perpetuated themselves in power and exploited the country since then (Anderson 1992).

This would perhaps make him or her understand deeper how and why DevCom embraces dialogue to, as Quebral (1988: 61) puts it, “help remove oppressive institutional barriers in rural society or as the awakening of rural people to their own powers and potentials.” Even in Latin America and other developing regions, the DevCom experience has shown that development “is dependent upon structural issues such as land ownership and human rights” (Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte 2006: xvii).

Third, the issue of language vis-à-vis development and communication has not received much scrutiny in Quebral’s discourse of DevCom. Although she maintains that DevCom practitioners should communicate in ways that people easily understand, Quebral has not delved much into how national and local languages can become potent forces of understanding and collective action among the people of a community and serve as a means for them to own the communication process and assert their cultural identity in DevCom projects.

Language is not value-free, as it embodies the culture of a society (Salazar 1996). Hence, whose language should be emphasised in the teaching, training and media products of DevCom? While the use of English has its own merits especially for DevCom practice outside the country and in a globalised world, the small attention given to native languages needs utmost reconsideration. In UPLB and other HEIs in the country, BSDC students have yet to read a textbook on DevCom written in the national language, and enroll in a course on DevCom writing in any of the vernaculars.

Many Filipino social scientists have already explained thoroughly how the national language and the various mother tongues of different ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines can help the Filipino people free themselves from neocolonial structures and mindset to achieve genuine development (Constantino and Atienza 1996; Jose 2009; Tolentino 2015). In other developing nations, many cases of media-based participatory DevCom projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America attest to the effectiveness and meaningfulness of local languages in bringing about social change (Gumucio-Dagron 2001).

Fourth, Quebral’s articulations of how national and local cultures should be used as bases or sources of values, contents and approaches in DevCom projects are expressed mainly in general terms. It is not anymore a question of whether or not culture is integral to DevCom because Quebral has repeatedly underscored that it is. She even acknowledges that the Philippines is culturally diverse (Quebral 1986b) and challenges DevCom practitioners to “let the cultural dimension become more visible in their practice” (Quebral 2002a:

13). But how this challenge could be operationalised not only in DevCom practice but also in DevCom education and research needs more articulations.

Take as an example how news stories are written in relation to cultural and linguistic considerations. Is the news structure of inverted pyramid, which originated from Western practice, suited to the storytelling practices of the Filipinos? Which among the news values are really relevant to them, and what more can be added to the list to make it culturally situated? How does a journalist “put facts in social context” (Quebral 2012b: 61)? The same questions can be asked of DevCom in other developing nations and communities.

Fifth, history, especially the socio-political struggles of developing nations, is scantily mentioned in Quebral’s discourse. Some scholars argue that development problems are “fundamentally political problems” (Hornik 1988: xii) and even history is political, as it is usually constructed by the powerful. To her credit, Quebral advocates self-determination of people and communities through an emancipating and empowering participatory process. But any emancipatory advocacy in DevCom is hollow without thorough understanding and articulation of the historical-political experiences and dynamics of a developing nation that has many ethnolinguistic groups like the Philippines.

In media reportage, for instance, much of who the disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals and groups are is often removed from their historical and political contexts. Take the case of indigenous peoples who are usually framed in Philippine media mostly in socio-economic terms and whose oppression by the powerful rarely makes the headlines of media stories. If DevCom is biased for people who have been made underprivileged by oppressive forces in the society, should it not subscribe to alternative and empathetic ways of articulating these people in their favour, without being untruthful to other individuals and groups involved? Hence, how should DevCom professionals ensure that the structure, language and content of stories are sensitive to the historical and political, not just socio-cultural, situatedness of a community, be it in the Philippines or in another developing country? To her credit, Quebral (1988: 64) has once called for the “need to update news and redefine what news is in developing countries.”

### **Quebral’s Discourse and its Field of Discursivity: Implications for Theorising in DevCom**

Dissanayake (1981) believes that indigenous theorising is indispensable for communication to break new grounds in the Asian context, engage the dominant Western theories, and contribute to global theorising in communication.

Learning “from Asiacentric communication pioneers and their pioneering works” is thus important (Miike 2016: 1); hence, this paper’s revisit and interrogation of Quebral’s DevCom discourse. The Filipina’s pioneering discourse of DevCom and the meaning potentials the discourse leaves in the field of discursivity provide critical insights into where scholars following her, be they Filipinos or not, can start pondering over indigenous theorising in DevCom. Two propositions integrate these insights—that DevCom is a *grounded field* and that it has an *alternative dimension*.

The first proposition argues that DevCom is grounded in social realities of developing nations and communities. Perhaps, Quebral would not have felt the need for another field of communication had she not seen contextual differences among nations. Her DevCom discourse may not be very explicit about the idea of groundedness, but many of the key articulations suggest or underscore the materiality of the developing nations’ contexts in general.

As a concept, groundedness often entails three important aspects: context-specificity, genuine participation and listening. Groundedness as context-specificity has been discussed in the preceding section (i.e., meaning potentials of DevCom), with the following questions serving as synthesis: How does the process of realisation of human potentials or transformation of a community take place when contexts shape every aspect of a communication intervention? How do contexts shape a communication intervention that people can truly relate to or that are profoundly intelligible to them?

Groundedness as genuine participation means people shape the processes and outcomes of DevCom projects in their own ways and according to their own contexts. Diversity is expected, as Quebral (1988: 11) herself says that “[i]deas about how human development is best achieved are nothing if not diverse.” Gumucio-Dagron (2001: 8) agrees, pointing out that “the experiences of participatory communication for social change are as diverse as the cultural and geographic settings in which they have been developing.” Quebral (2014: 48) also says that the cultural dimension of DevCom as a participatory process makes it “that much more diverse and rich as a field.” This directs scholars to the need to put under scrutiny the major assumptions of the prevailing participatory framework in DevCom. Waisbord (2001) recommends, in particular, that Western assumptions informing participatory models must be examined, especially those that nurture individualism more than a sense of community and stimulate conflict rather than consensus. As there is no one singular or universal formula for participation, any assumption on participatory communication must always be negotiated with people’s cultural, socio-economic and political conditions and struggles in ways that

do not compromise the kind of empowerment that they need. Any analysis of participatory communication cannot discount the importance of context (Gumucio-Dagron 2003), especially that the collective meanings people have of their experiences are embedded in their narratives that are produced in their own context (Custodio 2008).

Groundedness as listening asks both community outsiders and insiders to understand each other through a dialogic process that puts the interests of the latter first. Quarry and Ramirez (2009: 103–113) further suggest “listening to the context” (i.e., context as culture, geography, history, political systems, organisations/institutions, media and funding rules). Listening hopefully facilitates the gradual handover of the control and direction of DevCom projects to community people, who understand their situations and aspirations better. It also gives people more voice in project reports, research manuscripts and media texts; allows their identity, struggles and aspirations to shape what is reported about them and how; and gives their communicative experience more space in DevCom theorising.

The second proposition argues that DevCom has an alternative dimension. This cannot be more glaring each time DevCom inevitably finds itself providing unorthodox or different means of dealing with poverty, marginalisation and oppression. The concept of alternative communication in development has already been articulated by various scholars since the 1970s mostly as a reaction against the dominant modernisation models that have barely helped combat inequality and injustice in developing societies (e.g., see Beltran 1993; Rodriguez 2001). Even Quebral (1988: 40) ponders over the thought that rural development may be better achieved by “breaking new ground” or “trying alternatives.”

Quebral's discourse does not directly talk of DevCom having an alternative dimension, but several of its articulations practically say so. For instance, by articulating that DevCom sides with the poor and powerless and that it seeks genuine people participation, Quebral actually raises, albeit indirectly, the idea that DevCom processes and narratives should negotiate with, if not confront and challenge, the sources of inequality and injustice. Who and what produce and perpetuate many forms of inequality and injustice in a society in the first place? It is mainly those who control the dominant economic and political structures, as well as the systems they have established to sustain these structures, which cannot be separated from the communication and culture industries over which they also have enormous power and hegemony (Melkote and Steeves 2001).



In a globalising world which has communication and information systems dominated by a few transnational economic and media conglomerates (Ramonet 2006; Santos 2014) and which is characterised by the increasing privatisation of development (Anderson et al. 2012) and commodification of media and information (Enghel 2015), DevCom's allegiance with the poor, powerless and disadvantaged (Quebral 2012b) has never been more pressing. This allegiance, which is central to Quebral's discourse, entails openness to alternative options, especially if the majority of the poor and other disadvantaged groups are to actively assert their economic survival, social and political rights, and cultural roots and identity.

Talk of "another" (i.e., alternative) way of doing DevCom is also inevitable if the prevailing development industry goes "off-track" and becomes "a powerful business" and large development organisations have been "run like big corporations" (Quarry and Ramirez 2009: 29, 42). Having an alternative dimension, however, does not necessarily require DevCom projects to operate outside the prevailing development and communication industries. It also does not mean that DevCom cannot work within existing local socio-economic and political structures in a developing nation. In spite of various constraints faced by many funded DevCom projects (e.g., see Anderson et al. 2012; Enghel 2015; Gumucio-Dagron 2009), for instance, they have been able to take an alternative face in varying degrees.

Being an alternative also means DevCom may opt for one or more of the following in trying to help people improve their lives: (1) prefer more community-based communication practices over large-scale, mass communication ones; (2) prioritise and feature narratives and voices of the people, not that of personalities, media persons or experts whose voices dominate media texts and public discourses; (3) serve as a means through which people resist hegemonic cultural forces, and assert and enrich their own identities, beliefs, values and aspirations; (4) initiate a political process through which people engage in dialogue, help educate and empower themselves, and make their own decisions instead of leaving all their fate to some government bureaucracy and group of specialists (i.e., more faith in people); and (5) embrace cultural diversity amidst the homogenising tendencies of cultural industries dominated by commercial interests of transnational corporations. In addition, the dominance of media-centric DevCom projects makes a case for Quebral's persistent articulation of putting people, not media, at the centre of the field. As Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte (2006) put it, many development projects fail for being dependent on technologies that they cannot own or

control in the long run; in DevCom projects' case, these are oftentimes media technologies.

There is not a dearth of DevCom experiences embracing alternatives. For instance, Gumucio-Dagron (2001) has collected stories of 50 cases of grassroots experience in participatory communication through radio, video, theatre, internet and other media in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania. In most of these cases, the experience provided a grassroots community an alternative means of sharing information, discussing concerns, promoting literacy, conducting nonformal education activities and livelihood training, fostering cooperation and networks, raising consciousness, mobilising people to action, strengthening solidarity, affirming cultural identity, and even expressing dissent and resistance (Gumucio-Dagron 2001). Furthermore, the experience was grounded in active participation by the locals, indigenous cultures and languages, daily lives and struggles of the community people involved, and a sense of mission of emancipation and empowerment (Gumucio-Dagron 2001).

Thus, this paper asserts that DevCom experience in the Philippines is now ripe for theorising (Labor 2017; Librero 2012), with Quebral's DevCom discourse and its field of discursivity as a potential starting point. Note that this discursive examination of Quebral's discourse is just a preliminary work. There is a need for further interrogation of the discourse's articulations to find out how these can be re-examined, reconstructed and even integrated with some articulations of other DevCom discourses—in the context of each developing nation or community. The long-term goal is perhaps to come up with microtheories of DevCom situated in the context of developing nations and communities, and later, formulate strong macro-theories and metatheories that can enrich global theorising in the field. This is not to say that there have been no attempts to theorise DevCom in the Philippines. Ongkiko and Flor (1998: 153–160), for instance, have proposed that DevCom be added as the fifth theory of the press as it “plays a larger, deeper and more profound role” in helping humans realise their full potentials.

## **CONCLUSION**

The paper concludes that Quebral's discourse of DevCom asserts that differences in the social and cultural experiences among nations have necessitated the rethinking of the relevance and applicability of hegemonic Western theories, concepts and principles to the developing world. However,

it is generally vague on what these experiences are, like in the case of the Filipinos as a people and the Philippines as a nation. Moreover, articulations of how local historical, political and linguistic realities should inform and shape DevCom programs are wanting in the discourse. This is despite that her own propositions on genuine people participation imply that DevCom should also dig deeper into history, politics and language because development is deeply intertwined with all these.

As a result, Quebral's discourse has confined to the field of discursivity significant political, historical, ethnolinguistic and even cultural factors that could have strengthened more DevCom's identity as a people-centred, community-driven, process-oriented and culturally sensitive field of study and practice. It has also raised questions about what her discourse of development is. But whatever her DevCom discourse has not articulated, her pioneering propositions have nevertheless remained influential and practicable in DevCom and other development-oriented programs over the years since she started writing about the field.

Surely, Quebral's paramount place in DevCom is indisputable. As one Indian professor remarked in a parallel session during the 25th international annual conference of the Asian Media and Information Communication Centre (AMIC) Inc., Quebral already had "enormous contributions to development for/in communication" and scholars from developing nations should be grateful to her for that. But DevCom is not stagnant as a field, and as Quebral (1988: 13) herself admits, her statements on DevCom "will likely change—as they have changed—as we grow in wisdom." As each discourse is in constant negotiation with other discourses and altered in the process (Laclau and Mouffe 1985), those who believe in what DevCom stands for should revisit, rethink and reshape discourses like Quebral's for the benefit of the field and the people for whom it remains. There is much to learn from Quebral's important ideas on how a field of communication can genuinely be of, for and by the people, keeping in mind the challenge of rediscovering a nation's roots while dealing with a fast globalising world.

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## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> DevCom was defined by Quebral in 1971 as “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” (Quebral 1988: 147).
- <sup>2</sup> DevCom was redefined by Quebral in 2002 as “the art and science of human communication linked to a society’s planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential” (Quebral 2002a: 16).
- <sup>3</sup> DevCom was redefined again by Quebral in 2012 as “the science of human communication linked to the transitioning of communities from poverty in all its forms to a dynamic, overall growth that fosters equity and the unfolding of individual potential” (Quebral 2012a: 9).

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