Act for Action:

The Sabido Methodology in Burkina Faso can make a difference in reducing plastic waste

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Abstract

Plastic garbage is accumulating in the streets and fields of cities and rural areas in Burkina Faso. It is slowly turning into a physical threat to both livestock and human health. This paper does not focus on the physical problem of plastic garbage in the landscape but rather seeks to introduce the Sabido Methodology, as used by the NGO Population Media Centre, as a social change approach to address the underlying issue that people without thought discard plastic anywhere and everywhere. The Sabido Methodology is presented in this paper as a means of addressing the social behaviour that allows for plastic to be tossed indiscriminately in the streets, and, suggests that it is a methodology that should be used in tandem with structural efforts to curb the plastic garbage explosion.

1.0 Introduction

If you were to find yourself exploring a city in Burkina Faso, or the rural landscape alike, you would discover that near to anything that a plastic bag can get caught on, a bush, a sapling, a rock, will have a bag attached to it. Often less obvious because they tend to be camouflaged due to an accumulated layer of dirt or dust, you will also see bits of hard plastic littered around. On a windy day the bags will sometimes make their escape and float lazily around until they are snagged again by another shrub or bush. From a 'western'[1] perspective, coming from a world where plastic is slowly being demonized, this sight is often cited as an eyesore, however in Burkina Faso the people seem to rarely address the plastic as a problem and simply accept it as one accepts leaves on a lawn. This does not diminish the fact that plastic garbage is a problem in Burkina Faso. That is because while in terms of perception and conscious awareness it is a non starter for most Burkinabé, in its physical manifestation plastic is creating a number of concerns that need to be addressed. Two particular physical impacts can be identified; one, the livelihoods of many Burkinabé, invested in livestock, are being threatened because their animals are dying after munching on bits of plastic rubbish. Two, the health complications that arise as the plastic refuse traps moisture and provides breeding opportunities for mosquitoes, which manifests as an issue in the subsequent harmful diseases that they carry, i.e. malaria or dengue fever.

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[1] To clarify without getting into a geo-political debate by 'west' (western) I mean to emphasize that often those that I have met with a North American or European background have brought up the plastic issue in Burkina without my instigation. This is not to say that plastic and its negative aspects are not being addressed in other non-western countries, because in fact plastic is being addressed as a problem in some 'developing' countries and is actually finding more success in legislative terms.

My argument in this paper, founded on the concept of creeping normalcy being a major part of the problem in Burkina Faso, will try to establish that one of the best ways of approaching these issues is not necessarily to only utilize direct measures such as bolstering the ranks of clean up crews, implement a more sound garbage infrastructure or encourage grass root initiatives to address the mess.[2] Rather the aim should be a combination of introducing structural reforms to the garbage collection system and to attack the problem before the plastic ends up in the streets and other common areas. That will require bringing the issue into people's range of awareness. I am going to introduce the Sabido Methodology, a social change media methodology primarily used by the NGO Population Media Centre, as a suggested tool for achieving the social change that I feel is necessary to truly get the plastic issue under control in Burkina Faso. If you do not address bad habits[3] in an effective manner then little will ever really change. The basis for why the Sabido Methodology has potential in Burkina Faso, though never applied with an issue such as this one, is that it tackles and tries to change socio-cultural traits, such as those connected to the issue of plastic in Burkina Faso. The Sabido Methodology has had quite some success with changing social behaviours pertaining to health issues and there is no apparent reason that this cannot also be the case with the plastic refuse problem in Burkina Faso.

1.1 The Sabido Methodology

The Sabido Methodology gets its moniker from Miguel Sabido. As Miguel Sabido picked up on how invested audiences became in the characters and plots of the telenovela's in the 1970s, in Mexico. He started to realize the potential that these shows could have in presenting educational material to a wider audience. Where he saw the greatest opportunity was in a 'natural' aspect of any show, e.g. soap opera, drama, comedy etc, and that is that with the progression of a show the characters and plots are designed to change over time to allow for the realism required to keep audiences interested in, and connected to, what is happening (Sabido, 2003) Sabido took advantage of this and developed a methodology that follows the prescription of the development of 'normal' show, but he also incorporated "social and health issues into those commercially sponsored programs" (Ryerson, 2011b) as a subplot. He did this while he at the same time made sure to

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[2] Though these examples would most certainly also have to be a part of the process.
[3] In this case defined as bad because of the correlation between the habit and the negative consequences of the plastic being littered in the streets.

"maintain the popularity of the programs, lots of suspense, lots of drama, love triangles, all the stuff that cause people to tune in soap opera" (Ryerson, 2011b).

The goal of developing a show using the Sabido Methodology then becomes to not only entertain the audience but also to instigate thought and discussion on various topics addressed in the program (Sabido, 2003). Effectively, the point is to develop the characters and plots in a realistic way such that even though "characters may begin the series exhibiting the antithesis of the values being taught…through interaction with other characters, twists and turns in the plot, and sometimes even outside interventions, [the characters themselves] come to see the value of the program's underlying message" (PMC, 2003-2009a). Through this process the audience, who have been engaged with the characters through their observation, also start to pick up on and exhibit the lessons learned by their favorite characters (Singhal, 1993).

1.2 Research Problem

Plastic garbage is certainly an issue in Burkina Faso, however, this paper will address the root of the problem: plastic garbage being discarded without thought. The actions of Burkinabé are not deliberate and people toss plastic out on the street without thought of the consequences. They give away (as shop owners) and accept (as shoppers) copious amounts of plastic without giving thought as to what will happen with all that extra plastic. Introducing an initiative using the principles of the Sabido Methodology can be a means of affecting a consciousness of the problems that plastic waste causes. By increasing awareness of the problem, it will drastically reduce the amount of plastic that is strewn carelessly about. Therefore this paper will ask and answer:

- Why do people in Burkina Faso throw plastic out indiscriminately and why do they not see the plastic in the street as a problem?
- How can the Sabido Methodology be utilized to address the habit of throwing plastic out on the street?

2.0 Methods

While in Burkina Faso undertaking an internship and research for another thesis, I found myself presented with a rich but unplanned opportunity to tackle the necessary research for this paper. Though I would like to present that I have been highly methodical in my approach to the research of

this paper I have to note that my method has rather been one of an unplanned fashion. Subsequently I have become aware of a 'natural' logic to my approach as fitting rather aptly with the 'snowball method'.

The snowball method is one that does not follow any particular prescribed structure but relies on the randomness of referrals from one subject to the next (Biernack, 1981). It is based on the premise that one research subject can direct the researcher further to the next subject (Biernack, 1981). It is a method often used 'naturally' by researchers within the literature research context, where the researcher can pick up on elements of a text, or references, and explore the directions with which the literature can point the researcher. The same exponential factors occur when the subjects become people. One person interviewed will often willingly direct the researcher to another person, or several people (Biernack, 1981). This, if given time, can lead to a rather extensive list of contacts.

The challenge of this approach is that it can often peg the researcher into a corner of biased data. Those that are interviewed will refer the researcher on to others within the same field or perspective but potentially with more expertise (Biernack, 1981). This means that while you have the positive result of potentially getting more expert opinion and information you will often find yourself being steered toward a particular 'side' of the topic your researching. This is not necessarily a major complication for the nature of my research. For my research the more detailed and 'expert' the material I have collected has become, the more I have stood to benefit. This is because this paper presents one particular solution to a rather large problem and the more specific the information I needed to gather can be, with regards to the Sabido Methodology, the better. This remains so, as long as I maintain my understanding of the problem as one that is complex and requiring numerous approaches to tackle the plastic issue on a whole. Speaking to the relevance of this method to my research, the information collected from this research method has provided me with the necessary expert knowledge from those who have practical and theoretical experience with Sabido Methodology. Without this method I would never have been put in contact with the founder of the Population Media Centre and would not have been made wiser on the finite distinctions that separate the Sabido Methodology and other social change approaches.

Despite the 'unstructured' research approach the particular tools that I used to collect the information, through the Snowball Method, have been rather deliberate in that they presented as the most likely and optimal tools available. Three particular tools can be identified as highly useful in my research approach, the first was personal observation and conversations, the second was professional interviews and the third was extensive literature searches.

In order to get started and to find something of interest, or relevant to the overall goal of carrying out research the first, and many time most useful step, is to make yourself conscious of the conversation have, and events that you observe, from day to day. While it is not immediately necessary to keep track of what is discussed in an official manner, for example through notes, the main goal is to take in information that comes up in personal conversation and keep that information in the back of your mind. With respect to personal observation it becomes instantly more important to record what you see that you feel is of relevance (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003) If an immediate topic is eluding then often a single conversation or observation can provide the necessary spark to direct the researcher down a particular path. Personal conversations and observations allow for the researcher to become aware of other perspectives and information that the researcher may have been unaware of before (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003). This tool is very useful for that initial phase of any research.

This method can be highly ineffective and time consuming if the conversations do not revolve around topics that could be of interest. Therefore a proactive approach is often necessary in that the researcher should try to instigate discussion in the direction of some preconceived ideas or conversations should be held with subjects (individuals or groups) that may possess some form of expertise, for example, academics or professionals can often provide ideas or notions that they themselves have pondered but not yet researched themselves (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003). This tool is highly subjective though and the researcher should be aware that the conversations will be based on the biases of the individuals involved and that in many scenarios subjects may present ideas or facts that might not actually be based on proven understanding of an issue (Biernack, 1981). Therefore this tool is not fool proof, but if the researcher is aware of these traps then the potential can be greatly increased because the researcher can be prepared to undertake quick verification research before throwing himself or herself into an idea whole heartedly.

Personal and professional interviews, though somewhat similar to the previous tool is a tried and true tool within various forms of research but especially so within socio-cultural research (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001). In effect they are based on researcher to subject (individual or groups) questioning that allows for first hand information to be drawn out in a structured way (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003). This is the primary difference between the unstructured nature of simple conversations noted above and structured interviews. This tool can be applied both in the primary research formulation phase or the research data collection phase, however because I used the conversation tool as my research 'instigator', I used the more formal structured interview tool in collecting the needed information from my informants via a question and answer format (see appendix B for a list of questions formulated for my interviews). Interviews present with a number of drawbacks, primarily that they can be very time intensive and can subject to biases on the informant and researchers behalf (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2003). However the benefits when linked to the Snowball Method is that the interviewees are often able to provide expert opinion and information on the research topic, as well as links to other subjects, both with respect to people and topics that maybe be relevant to the researchers goals (Biernack, 1981).

My research yielded information from a handful of sources but by far the most important was the contact I made with Kriss Barker, and Bill Ryerson (See appendix A). In their positions at the Population Media Centre (PMC) these two individuals were able to provide me with some highly detailed information that clarified the methodology to me. Unfortunately I did not get a chance to meet these individuals personally and our communication was solely by e-mail. As described in my methods, section I was introduced to Kriss Barker through a personal contact and she then further introduced me, via e-mail, to a wealth of material and a number of her colleagues, Bill Ryerson included. Through the structured nature of my e-mail interviews I was able to pose a host of detailed questions (See Appendix B) and I received the answers in an easily decipherable written format.

Carrying out my literature research consisted of reviewing and recording, through notes, any and all relevant literature and material. This approach, in keeping with the Snowball Method, to be truly effective in expanding the research parameters, was highly based on the referral of one document to another. Using the various mediums at hand also opened the door for research expansion as the internet, libraries, databases etc. are invaluable resources for information collection. This method

however was and is extremely time intensive and requires persistence when relevant literature does not become immediately available as was the case with this topic.

3.0 Theory

In addressing the issue as to why, in Burkina Faso, plastic garbage is discarded without thought, and why garbage is accepted in the landscape, this paper raises three 'theoretical' concepts. The first is based on the work of Ben Tiggelaar, who, as a proponent for how to instigate lasting change, has combined the research of prominent psychologists like John Bargh and Roy Baumeister to establish that when it comes to trying to implement change "we focus on conscious, planned behavior, which forms merely 5% of our total behavior. 95% of our behavior is unconscious, automatic, and is triggered by our surroundings" (Tiggelaar, 2008). What makes this statement particularly interesting in the plastic refuse case, in Burkina Faso, is when you draw out what it infers. It means to say that "most of a person's everyday life is determined not by their conscious intentions and deliberate choices but by mental processes that are put into motion by features of the environment and that operate outside of conscious awareness and guidance" (Bargh and Chartrand *in* Uhlmann et al. 2008:294). Therefore if you were to evaluate a Burkinabé's actions when he or she throws a plastic bag out of the window of a bus, then it is possible to link his or her actions with a strong likelihood to an unconscious and unintentional act. Furthermore this behaviour occurs not because people are maliciously trying to dispose of the plastic so that it wreaks optimal havoc but rather they are launching the plastic out of the window because it is a behaviour they have learned growing up in a society where everyone does it.

This leads into Albert Bandura's theories on social learning, where his work on combining social and psychological aspects of learning is particularly pertinent because it leads to an understanding of how habits, such as those addressed in this paper, may be developed as someone grows up in a particular society. Albert Bandura, in his classical study on aggression, tried to show that social learning is highly based on observation (Bandura, 1961). This idea of observational learning, as set out by Bandura, stipulates that four conditions need to be present in order for behaviour to be adopted:

- The observer needs to observe 'the behaviour'
- The observer needs to digest the behaviour and be able to recall it
- The observer needs to be able to reproduce the behaviour

- The observer needs to be motivated to carry out the behaviour (Bandura, 1977)

If these four elements can be found between an actor and observer then the likelihood, for the observer to pick up on the actions and to emulate those actions himself, or herself, is greatly increased.

Finally creeping normalcy can be presented as a reason why, from a Burkinabe perspective, plastic garbage is not seen as an issue in the landscape. While in of itself it cannot be designated a theory as such, in its conceptual nature it is highly applicable to the theme of this paper. Creeping normalcy, a concept evoked by Jared Diamond as an element in his hypothesis as to why civilizations collapse, (Diamond, 2005) is what I argue is the cause for why people do not see a need to change and reduce the plastic in Burkina Faso. I do not want to suggest that Burkina Faso faces the same dire outcome that Jared Diamond predicts with this concept in connection to why civilizations collapse. However, effectively the argument is that over the course of time, change can be nigh imperceptible, especially if the change is incremental (Diamond, 2005). Applying the concept to the case of plastic in Burkina Faso, the accumulation of refuse has been highly gradual, with individuals slowly adding to the mess by unconsciously releasing a plastic bag or a bottle in the streets, one at a time. This means that the issue is not perceived as an issue because people are not aware of it as an issue due to the fact that plastic has grown up around them ever so slowly. The garbage becomes a part of an accepted landscape. Therefore, as Uhlmann et al explain "it is impossible to be aware of influences on a state if you are not aware of the state itself" (Ulhmann et al,). If plastic has become slowly present in the everyday sights of the people of Burkina Faso, then realizing that it is a problem becomes quite difficult because plastic is just part of the norm of the streetscape.

4.0 Empirical analysis

In this section I will break my empirical analysis into four parts. The first part will provide some of my personal observations from my time doing research in Burkina Faso. I will then present some of my interview material with PMC employees and how they use the Sabido Methodology and why what they do could be applicable in the Burkinabé context. The third part will be concern with the Sabido Methodology and what theories it draws on to be a successful social change methodology. The fourth part will be a presentation of why a PMC style initiative might be successful in Burkina Faso.

4.1 Personal Observations

In all honesty my initial reactions to plastic garbage in Burkina Faso were actually pretty minimal and I attribute this to my upbringing in a number of countries of the global south where garbage and plastic refuse in the streets is not uncommon. However as time progressed I slowly started to become aware that my conversations and discussions with locals were devoid of any reflection on the garbage as a problem, at all. This stood in contrast to many of those whom I worked with, as an intern at the Danish Embassy in Ouagadougou, who on a number of occasions made remarks on how awful an impact the plastic had on the visual beauty of the landscape. In connection to research for another thesis (see Flyng, 2011), those I spoke with, who were connected to the efforts of the various initiatives to recycle plastic, explained that there was a real problem with garbage but their reasons were founded on the impact that the plastic was starting to have on their existence. This was in specific reference to plastic causing the premature death of their livestock.

Through my conversations with Burkinabé I have come to realize that these people who concern themselves on the plastic issue are in the minority. One gentleman I spoke to one day, when buying yam fries, noted that indeed plastic had not been so common when he was a child, but he did not remark on it being any particular issue nowadays and seemed to simply accept it as something ever so common, like a rock or leaf. One particular question I got in response to my inquisitiveness on the matter, that rang through on a number of occasions was why it should be an issue? When selling yam fries or vegetables or any other produce, means wrapping them in a plastic bag as a natural aspect of selling something then why should the consequences when the bag is no longer needed, ending with a plastic bag on the ground, be any less natural? I witnessed both adults and children throwing, launching, kicking, dropping, leaving behind and sweeping away plastic that no longer was useful. That which it contained, whether it was food or water or some other commodity, was used up and thus the plastic was disposed of in the most natural way, by simply letting it go. This was the case with more or less everyone I observed and I personally never saw anyone throwing plastic into a garbage bin. This however may also be connected to the fact that public garbage bins are few and far between and often are overflowing such that throwing garbage in its direction would be as close as you could get to getting garbage in the bin.

4.2 PMC Interviews

I will not present every question that I asked in my interviews over the course of my research, for a list of the questions I used, please see Appendix B. I will use this section to present some of the major questions that provided me with answers to address whether or not the Sabido Methodology could be applied to the plastic waste problem in Burkina Faso.

When reading the literature on the Sabido Methodology and other social change media in general I was struck rather immediately how very similar these approaches seem to propaganda. Having grown up understanding propaganda to be a mechanism used by evil forces, primarily but not exclusively in times of war or in a questionable political climate, I was immediately thrown for a loop. This is because I was being presented with something clearly akin to propaganda but instead it is being used for 'good'. Asking Kriss Barker about this she explained to me that indeed the link between propaganda and social change media is quite close, noting that social change media, though not the PMC nor Sabido Methodology, has been used quite destructively, the most famous example being Rwanda where media was used to direct people to undertake acts of genocide. (Barker, 2011c).

In a further explanation she showed that the PMC's role is based on offering the expertise in programming with the Sabido Methodology, and not to espouse social values. That means that the PMC's works with the objectives drafted in Policy Framework which "is based on the laws, international agreements to which the country is signatory, and the positions of influence/opinion groups, such as religious or traditional groups, political parties, etc" (Barker, 2007). This Policy Framework reflects the value system that a country has officially adopted to guide behaviour. Where the Sabido Methodology becomes useful is addressing behaviours that deviate from what the government has defined in its policies (Barker, 2011b). Kriss Barker provides this as one mechanism to avoid the Sabido Methodology from being used negatively, as it is a powerful tool for social change that therefore should not be used by a single entity, but rather must be put forth through an amalgam of partners who desire a similar goal.

Bill Ryerson also explained to me that "traditional health messaging is, in fact, propaganda because it tells people what to do and presents only one option" (Ryerson, 2011a) but that the PMC's use of the Sabido Methodology is fundamentally different in that it shows a range of behaviours and

consequences related to those behaviours and then lets the audience make the decisions. (Ryerson, 2011). Unlike propaganda people who sit on the other end of Sabido Methodology messaging are given the tools and encouraged to "make informed choices based on observing the results of various character's behaviours" (Ryerson, 2011).

The second major question I would like to present that I used in my interviews was whether the interviewees felt the Sabido Methodology could be used to address a plastic refuse problem like the one in Burkina Faso. While I felt confident, based on the independent research that I had carried out, that the Sabido Methodology would certainly present with a high potentiality I wanted to hear it 'from the horse', mouth'. Therefore I asked, "do you think that the PMC methodologies/methods can be adapted to other social issues, then those the PMC [currently] addresses?" and received the response that the PMC's communication tool (the Sabido methodology) can be applied to any pro-social behavior change (Ryerson, 2011). Kriss Barker was also very emphatic in noting "YES! The most important thing is to have a clearly defined, specified behaviour change" (Barker, 2011a) and furthered that the potential lay with the PMC, if not another organization, to carry out an initiative to address an issue like plastic refuse in Burkina Faso because while "the organization [PMC] was founded to use the Sabido methodology to address human behaviours that can help to achieve sustainable population numbers (hence, Population in our name). However, we are evolving to use this very powerful communication tool to achieve other behaviour change objectives" (Barker, 2011c).

Finally I concluded my interviews wanting to understand what pitfalls there are to the Sabido Methodology. I do not believe that any approach is fool proof and I wanted assurance that the perceived negative aspects, as understood by those who work with the Sabido Methodology, were not such that they would/could prevent the applicability of the Sabido Methodology in addressing Burkina Faso's plastic garbage problem. Therefore I asked "do you think there are any negative aspects or draw backs to the methodology? Or if not anything directly negative then things that one has to be aware of when using the methodology?" and was pleasantly surprised with a point form answer that indicated that the biggest harm occurs when the strictures of the Sabido Methodologies are not adhered to because this affects its efficacy, especially when short cuts are taken, such as:

- "Decreasing the number of episodes (Sabido requires "long running" which is at least 70-100 episodes and is ideally about 140-150 episodes)

- Use of formats other than serialized drama (such as music videos, songs, theatre…). These other media can be used as complementary communication activities (and are quite effective when used in this way!), but the approach loses much of its power when it is not anchored in serial drama

- Lack of transitional characters (some project organizers mis-understand Sabido's use of Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and include only positive and negative characters as role models for the audience)

- Translating programs (as opposed to 'transcreating', which means adapting the program to a different language group/culture as opposed to simple dubbing the audio/dialogue) lack of comprehensive and quality formative research" (Barker, 2011c).

4.3 The theoretical components of the Sabido Methodology

Though the Sabido Methodology is a singular concept it is actually made up of a collection of theories from a range of fields, from communications, to entertainment, to psychology, to education and performance arts. These different theories, when brought together, strengthen the Sabido Methodology's approach into a holistic mechanism for targeting social change. Effectively the methodology, as described by Kriss Barker, draws on six different theoretical approaches, "a circular adaptation of Shannon and Weaver's Communication Model…Bentley's Dramatic Theory…Jung's Theory of Archetypes and Stereotypes and the Collective Unconscious…the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura…MacLean's Concept of the Triune Brain, supplemented by Sabido's own Theory of the Tone" (Barker, 2011b).[4]

One of the fundamental aspects of the Sabido Methodology is based on an adaptation of a communications model set out by Shannon and Weaver. When designing the methodology Miguel Sabido developed a communications loop from Shannon and Weaver's linear model of

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[4] This paper is not designed to parrot the information that I received from Kriss Barker and what is presented on the Population Media Centre's website, therefore if more detail is desired of these communications theories outside of what I can relay in this paper than please go to the Population Media Centre's website where they more intricately describe the applicable theories.

communications (Ugalde, 2011). In the Shannon and Weaver model the communicative process is one that basically functions as a five step line between a message source to a message destination. (please see figure 1.1). Initially the source develops a message, the source then uses a transmitter and sends the message, as a signal, to a receiver. The receiver then internalizes the information, along with any external factors that impact the message, or as Shannon and Weaver call it 'Noise', and passes the message from the source on to the last stage, the destination. In the case of the destination, the receiver can equally be the destination as it can be another person (PMC, 2003-2009a).
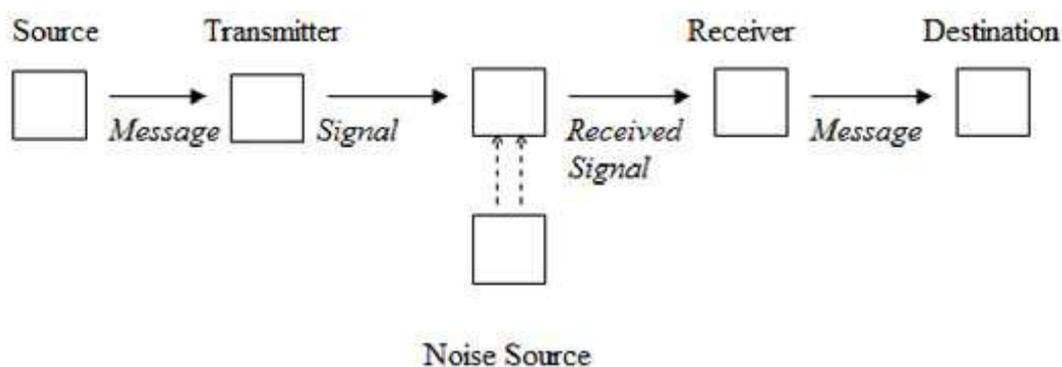

Figure 1.1 – Shannon and Weaver Linear Communications Model as depicted on the Population Media Centres website (PMC, 2003-2009a).

As noted above, where Sabido made changes to Shannon and Weavers model for his own methodology was in turning the linear model into a loop and used it when defining the process needed for a telenovela (a.k.a soap opera). This is to say Sabido explains "the communicator [the source] is the manufacturer of a product, the message is 'buy this product,' the medium is the soap opera, the receiver is the consumer [destination]" (PMC, 2003-2009a). He then goes further to indicate that the destination develop a response to the message and that response feeds back, in the case of telenovela's as "the purchase of the product and television ratings" (PMC, 2003-2009a) back to the source (or communicator as Sabido calls it). This 'new' model allowed Sabido the grounding to better understand the cyclical process existent behind the relationship between the source and the destination. This is extremely important for the Sabido Methodology because if the show does not meet with a response then it cannot feed back into the production of the show. If no results can be discerned then the process is not functioning properly, because the Sabido methodology is result oriented on a twofold basis. Firstly it needs the show to become popular so that the show can keep running. Secondly it needs an engaged audience for the subplot, the social

message, to make a difference. If the show is not popular then it can only be considered ineffectual both as show for entertainment and educational purposes (Singhal, 1993).

In keeping with the fact that the Sabido Methodology relies heavily on the aspects of entertainment to get its message across to the audience, then the methodology also draws on an important element of the Dramatic Theory by Bentley. This is because in order for a Soap Opera to become a success it needs to be able to draw the audience into the show and this means being structured on one of Bentley's "five genres of theatre (tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, farce, and melodrama)" (PMC, 2003-2009a). The link between Bentley's theory and the Sabido Methodology lies in Miguel Sabido's adoption of the melodrama genre as the best way to achieve his two goal approach. A melodrama, because it "presents reality in a slightly exaggerated sense in which the moral universes of good and evil are in discord" (PMC, 2003-2009a), and allows for the development of characters that, according to the plot in the story, either are presented as for or against the social message.

This dramatic means of developing a show allows the audience to identify with characters that are clearly good or bad. This makes presenting a social message much less complex because good and evil characters can be easily linked to the social message based on a 'for or against' stance. That the audience can then identify with these exaggerated characters means that the viewers can move their perceptions of the social message in tandem with their favorite characters. This means that, take for example a show with a social message on the tenants of safe sex, when an evil character slowly starts to realize over the course of the plot's twists and turns that indeed wearing a condom is probably a good thing to do, then the audience who have been following the show, especially if they identify with the specific character, start to pick up on that characters changing view point and can start to develop their own educated opinions on the matter.

Getting footing in the world of psychology is the next aspect of the Sabido Methodology. Carl Jung's Theory of the Collective Unconscious and the development of archetypes and stereotypes is extremely important to the scope of the Sabido Methodology. This is because, as noted before, in order for a show to gain success it needs to present a plotline and characters that the audience can identify with. Jung explains that there are only a handful of what he calls archetypes, which persist universally, be they in myths, legends or folktales. The characters in soap operas are no exception and characters that confirm archetypes such as the joker, the princess, the wise man, to name a few,

are commonly used. Because these archetypes exist not only in TV shows but also in the audience then it allows for an added connection to be drawn between the characters and the individual viewers and "through these characters, the viewer finds an archetypical essence of him or herself that interacts with the social message" (PMC, 2002-2009a). Where this works in favour of the social message, is that the producers of a show can portray the "archetypes as positive or negative stereotypes, representing the societal norms of the target audience" (PMC, 2003-2009a).

Maybe one of the most important elements of the Sabido Methodology is that it draws from Albert Bandura's theories on social learning and social cognition. This is because in these theories Bandura forwards that people "learn new behaviours from vicariously experiencing the actions of others" (PMC, 2003-2009a). Furthermore Bandura stipulates that for there to be social learning then there must be connection between the observer and what they are learning, there has to be imitation, the concepts have to be understandable, and there has to be a role model that espouses the behaviour (Bandura, 1989). This is perhaps the key to why social change is possible through media such as soap operas. As the audience watches a show they are presented with role models that in and of themselves are learning lessons through these characters adapting to the changes they experience, the audience is provided with observable options to the obstacle that they have in their own lives. Bandura's theories also try to explain that "positive rewards have a vicarious effect upon the observer [in this case, the audience] and can motivate audience members to practice similar behavior(s)" (PMC, 2003-2009a), this also means that if a character on a show is punished for doing something undesirable then that characters punishment on the show provides an observable experience to the audience that can "inhibit his or her practice of the same behavior" (PMC, 2003-2009a).

The final theory to present here in connection to the fundamentals of the Sabido Methodology is a combination of the Triune Brain Theory and Miguel Sabido's own Theory of Tone. This mash of two theories is one that Miguel Sabido used in developing the theatrical aspect of his methodology. The Triune Brain theory is one that is based on a division of the brain into three separate zones, where each zone is responsible for a different form of perception, cognitive, affective and predispositional (PMC, 2003-2009a). What Sabido wanted out of this theory was to develop an approach for actors to embody the perceptions they were supposed to display on the show, based on the three zones, so as to provide the audience with the most realistic and holistic presentation based

not only on the message but also on the tone of the show. What Sabido found was that the audience can quite easily be turned off of a message if the tone that the actors reflect does not appropriately match the issue at hand. Therefore actors who are working with a production using the Sabido Methodology, as suggested by Sabido's theory, need to be able, and are encouraged, to tap into the emotional, impulse or cognitive zones to be able to promote the social message as effectively as possible.

4.4 The applicability of a PMC style approach in Burkina Faso

The PMC is an organization founded by Bill Ryerson that uses the Sabido Methodology to further their goals of addressing global population growth. They utilize entertainment-education as developed by Sabido to educate audiences on issues caused by unchecked population expansion ranging from education on HIV/AIDS to family planning to environmental conservation. Within each region and country that the PMC operates either television or radio are mediums that are utilized to reach audiences, depending on which medium prevails for efficacy. The PMC collaborates with governmental and non-governmental institutions to "design and implement a comprehensive media strategy for addressing family and reproductive health issues" (PMC, 2003-2009a), among a number of other social issues, and these programs using the Sabido Methodology target the identified social problem by:

- **"**Identifying the various cultural issues and prevailing attitudes affecting decision making about sexual risk behaviors within the country.
- Analyzing barriers and opportunities for effective use of the mass media for promoting reproductive health.
- Developing an action plan that incorporates as much of the broadcast media as possible in a concerted campaign designed to promote sexual and reproductive health" (PMC, 2003-2009a).

The PMC does not only seek to present the Sabido Methodology on its own to try and change behaviours but rather to incorporate it into a bigger strategy that includes a Whole Society Strategy and Transmedia approach. Effectively these approaches mean not only addressing a social behaviour via one medium but spreading the message out over different media platforms including "such as comic books, electronic comic books, electronic games, internet videos, websites and

blogs for individual characters, mini-episodes, messages from characters delivered via mobile phones" (PMC, 2003-2009b) and then to provide the necessary training to assist with the changes. For example this could include providing assistance in the training of health workers or social workers when it comes to health messaging (PMC, 2003-2009c). Combining these approaches with the Sabido Methodology has provided the PMC some rather positive results.

To take one particular unrelated example, but relevant because of the method and the region it was developed, one can look at Burkina Faso where the Population Media Centre, in conjunction with targeting Mali and Ivory Coast, developed a radio serial drama to address the issue of child trafficking in these three countries. While the PMC program was developed for three countries, the similarities of the problem and context in all three countries allowed for the same show to be aired in all three nations. The program which was titled "*Cesiri Tono* (Fruits of Perseverance) was done in partnership with First Voice International, which distributed the program via WorldSpace satellite to 169 community radio stations" (Barker, 2011b). In conducting research to establish if the show was at all reaching the goal of bringing awareness to the issue of child tracking a random sample household survey was conducted in all three countries. The survey concluded that the programs produced positive results in all three countries in that substantially more people became aware of the issue after the program aired but specifically in Burkina Faso:

- 23% of listeners had taken action against exploitative child labor, compared to 9% of non-listeners (Barker, 2011b).
- 96% of listeners could identify at least one place that provides family planning/reproductive health services, compared to 80% of non-listeners (Barker, 2011b).

These kinds of results can also be found in all of the countries that the PMC have developed programs in. This is because "many of these programs, in many countries, are the top rated programs on the air, we get audiences that range between 25 percent of the populations, and in the case of northern Nigeria 82 percent of the population, that listen every week" (Ryerson, 2011).

5.0 Analysis

Albert Bandura provides the opening salvo in this analysis of the Sabido Methodology and whether indeed it can be used as a methodology to approach the social change needed in Burkina Faso to address littering plastic. Bandura explains in his social learning theory, "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new

behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (Bandura, 1977:22). This means that in order for good habits to be learned then good habits have to be observed. Right now in Burkina Faso the bad habit of throwing out plastic garbage is the dominant behaviour. Bandura is often quoted in saying that "learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do" (Bandura, 1977:22) and this is exceedingly so in Burkina Faso. Therefore to introduce a social change media methodology like the Sabido Methodology could provide the necessary material/information that Burkinabé can observe and emulate.

Taking a second point of departure and inspiration from a quote, given to me through a personal discussion with a Burkinabé,[5] "Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is within their souls" (Qur'an Ra'd, 13:11), and removing the religious connotations, I see an interesting degree of relevance for my over all argument. This is because it gets to the point in denoting two vital elements needed for social change. The first is that change does not occur on its own and the second is that change requires active participants. This very notion can be confirmed in Newton's first law of motion which expresses the exact same idea in that no body changes unless it is acted on by an external force (Halliday, 2007). This would indicate that not only are two objects needed for change to occur but a catalyst is also needed to instigate the change. Not that my design is to get too technical in the analogies, but they support what I reason with the Sabido Methodology in addressing plastic refuse in Burkina Faso.

If one interprets the plastic problem in Burkina Faso as an issue indicative and caused by the insipid nature of bad habits and creeping normalcy, than the issue is one similar to inertia where the object, or in this case the increasing plastic pollution, is changing/accumulating at such a slow constant pace that no change is being perceived at all. This despite the fact that in reality change is indeed occurring and it is a detrimental change, but nobody can see it. What is then required is the introduction of a catalyst that will bring to light the bad habits and the Sabido Methodology, through a Population Media Centre type initiative, could instigate change by addressing the perceptions and attitudes that cause plastic waste in Burkina Faso. This is because the Sabido

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[5] A gentleman who recognized the plastic as an issue but saw it to be highly complex in the Burkinabe context. Ironically he ended our discussion with the ever optimistic arabic phrase In'Shallah (god willing).

Methodology harnesses the power of storytelling, which is based on "the idea of combining entertainment and education [which] goes as far back in human history as the timeless art of storytelling" (Rice and Atkin, 2000:344), which is the oldest method of imparting an educative message.

If one looks at the Sabido Methodology and what storytelling is; "a modality for communicating: it is a technique for entertaining, educating, and training. Narrative is most often considered an artifact that is created by a human for a particular purpose…narratives are meant to be experienced by an audience (a reader, listener, watcher, interactor, etc.)" (Riedl et al, 2008:23), then effectively the Sabido Methdology is simply modernizing storytelling, by creating believable stories on the radio and TV that people can follow. John Forester explains the efficacy of storytelling when he says that "far more than descriptions of events, stories are forms in which their tellers can offer what they take to be worth passing on" and that "telling stories, participants present examples of virtue to emulate or vice to avoid…telling their stories participants…offer insights regarding the real story behind another's façade…Such storytelling provides not simply a 'who dunnit?' record, but the quite practical context for future action and judgement" (Forester, 1999:137). This connection between the Sabido Methodology and the basic concept of telling a story is what gives it the potential for success anywhere. This combined with the PMC's Whole Society Strategy and Transmedia approaches, that aim at using "print, television, radio, music, and new media with training for clinic workers, journalists and television reporters to reweave a country's mythology concerning…[a behaviour]" (PMC, 2003-2009c), could make a PMC style approach highly effective in changing how people perceive and approach plastic in Burkina Faso.

People buy in to the plots of the show like they would to a good camp fire story. This leads to the potential criticism that it is not participatory methodology for social change, but rather, it is sinister in that it creates the illusion of participation because the audience feels they are connected to the characters on their favorite show (Brown, 1990). Historically entertainment-education and participatory methods "have disagreed very much. EE [entertainment-education] has grown out of marketing, persuasion theory and diffusion of innovation theory. Retrospectively, EE is therefore paradigmatically linked to the often very political agenda of the modernization theorists and practitioners" (Tufte, 2001:30). At the core this is a methodology of one group, often a government and likeminded partners, trying to convince another group, often citizens not conforming of

behaviour that the government would prefer. Where the Sabido approach can be seen to somewhat contradict this criticism is that in adapting Shannon and Weaver's Communication Model and adding the cyclical twist, Miguel Sabido did turn the Sabido Methodology into a semi-participative approach. The degree of participation is of course limited because it is dependent on the audience to collectively show disapproval, reducing its popularity and lowering its ratings. An individual does not have the power to really participate in the progression of this methodology.

However, as Forester explains sometimes "deliberative conversations about value – about the interpretation and aptness of goals and means – are inescapable aspects of practical action" (Forester, 1999:115). Which can be interpreted as meaning that if change is desired, which it is slowly starting to become, and it stands in everyone best interests, then sometimes practical action has to be taken that does not always adhere to processes of participation or democracy. Therefore the Sabido Methodology may not live up to total participation but it does draw short of being considered propaganda, in the negative sense, because as Kriss Barker and Bill Ryerson explain it is a methodology that provides options. It does not dictate what people can or cannot do. It does provide suggestions but built into the very nature of suggestion is the freedom to make decisions based on what is suggested.

This is not the only challenge to the Sabido Methodology. Where starting a Sabido Methodology driven initiative may have some difficulties in Burkina Faso is in the lack of an infrastructure to support any changes that may be suggested in a program aimed at encouraging people to take plastic waste into consideration and dispose of it appropriately. In order for messaging of this nature to be successful then it would have to be carried out with a tandem effort by the government to establish a garbage disposal system that would take care of the plastic that people allocate for proper disposal. Most importantly people would have to be able to throw the plastic somewhere when in public, and currently public trash cans exist in rare circumstances, but the garbage they contain is very rarely carted away. Therefore as Kriss Barker notes, it is vital for the success of a program that there is a "service infrastructure to allow for individuals/communities to undertake this behaviour" (Barker, 2011a). However, the relatively new establishment of a recycling centre in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso's capital could provide a reason for hope that the necessary infrastructure is coming to address the problem. This recycling centre deals exclusively with plastic garbage and so an initiative that could be coupled with the expansion of this new facility's services

might allow for a more secure success in changing people attitudes and appropriately dispose of plastic waste.

Despite the difficulties noted in the last couple of paragraphs, with specific respect to the Burkinabé context there are also a few elements that makes the Sabido Methodology highly 'implementable' in Burkina Faso. First and foremost is that if we combine Bandura's Social Learning Theory, with Tiggelaar's assertion that the unconscious mind plays such a big role in everyday actions, and the notion of creeping normalcy, then we can define the problem of plastic refuse as one linked to bad habits. The Sabido Methodology is specifically designed to address social behaviours and changing bad habits through the suggestion of good habits. Therefore if one does not take local context into consideration then the basic aim of the Sabido Methodology, to change behaviour, means that it can tackle the basic problem in Burkina Faso, bad habits. Secondly, in Burkina Faso, in the face of the growing consequences that plastic is starting to have on human and livestock health impact there is a very slow growing awareness of the issue (see Flyng, 2011). This means that a program could find both national and local support in its development to give it the legitimacy needed to be implemented. Thirdly the PMC already have had a functioning and successful program in Burkina Faso and are currently developing a new program to target female circumcision (Connolly, 2011). This can be seen as an indicator that the Sabido Methodology is viewed as a 'workable' approach in the Burkinabé context.

Finally the biggest reason why the Sabido Methodology can meet with success in Burkina Faso is due to Burkina Faso's strong storytelling traditions. As I presented previously this particular aspect of the Sabido Methodology makes it extremely effective in most contexts, but not least in the Burkinabé context where storytelling has such a rich tradition. In Burkina Faso, like in most parts of West Africa, oral traditions have played a pivotal role as "a rich source of maintaining the consciousness of traditional values and patterns of moral behaviour" (Kaschula, 1998:46). The Mossi people, the most predominant in Burkina Faso, have a strong storytelling tradition. Within their storytelling culture there are two particular institutions. Firstly there are the Bendre, who serve as the "master of the Word. He [or she] holds the power of the Word and is the authority on the history of the region and the village" (Sissao, 2010:xiii), and then there are the secular 'evening storytellers'. These storytellers "impress upon the group models of Mooaga [Mossi plural] society to follow" (Sissao, 2010:xiv) and use "folktales as the most appropriate form for teaching young

children to express themselves, to structure their thoughts, and to reason" (Sissao, 2010:xiv). Furthermore, as Sissao notes, "through the process of reformulation, the storytellers also integrate into their tales societal changes as well as any new concerns of the group" (2010:xv). Bringing a methodology like the Sabido approach, which draws on storytelling techniques, means that there is a strong possibility that a Sabido structured serial drama would meet with quite some success in Burkina Faso.

6.0 Conclusion

In this paper I have reasoned that plastic refuse has become a problem in Burkina Faso because people simply do not see it as a problem. I asked "Why do people in Burkina Faso throw plastic out indiscriminately and why do they not see the plastic in the street as a problem?" and used Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory to explain why people have learned their bad habits. They grow up in an environment where they observe everyone throwing plastic out into the street as an automatic reaction to being done with the plastic. I then drew on Ben Tiggelaar's assertion that 95% of human actions are unconscious and represent forces of habit. Combining this with the notion of creeping normalcy I have argued that people simply do not view plastic garbage as a problem because it is an issue that has slowly crept up around their ankles. The accumulation of one plastic bag at a time is simply to slow a process to cause much of a notice.

In asking "How can the Sabido Methodology be utilized to address the habit of throwing plastic out on the street?", I have suggested that the Sabido Methodology can be useful in Burkina Faso in targeting the automatic actions that lead to plastic being thrown out of a bus window, swept out onto the street, or released from an unclenched fist. I have presented that the Sabido Methodology can be useful because in essence it is adopting the adage that the only way to fight fire is with fire. The Sabido Methodology utilizes a method that intriguingly can be likened to creeping normalcy. It relies on social media to slowly introduce notions and concepts to the viewers over the course of a TV or radio serial drama. The expected result is that the viewers internalize what the characters on TV or the radio do and start to do it themselves. Once these behavioural changes have become internalized then perspectives will also be changed and the plastic will be seen for what it is, non-biodegradable ever present garbage that is wreaking havoc. Therefore if a PMC like initiative that uses the Sabido Methodology can be started, then, as this paper has argued, it will be a strong step towards dealing with plastic refuse in Burkina Faso.

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Appendix A:

For context this is the first e-mail sent. Once I received confirmation from my informants that they were interested in helping me then I sent the subsequent questions noted below:

Hello,

My name is Torsten Lajoie Flyng. I am currently an intern at the Danish Embassy in Ouagadougou and a student at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. I am in the process of writing two masters theses, one for a Rural Development degree and the other for an Environmental Communications degree, and I have targeted an issue in Burkina Faso that I feel would be highly interesting to investigate. Over the course of the three months I have been here I have become recurrently aware of the predominance of plastic bags that float around in the street. For my Rural Development thesis I am doing research on why there is so much plastic garbage to be found strewn about as well as how some grassroots initiatives have sprung up to address the issue (one particular in Bobo-Dioulasso where women collect the plastic bags and weave it into remarkable functional products like purses, toys, wallets etc).

To keep things manageable I have wanted to keep my Environmental Communications thesis within the same topic area as the Rural Development thesis however I have not been able to come up with ideas until I came across your organization, Population Media Centre. Now I think that I have an idea and I wanted to contact you to see if you might be able to provide me with any information. Through my research for my Rural Development thesis I have come to understand the plastic bag issue in Burkina Faso as one that revolves around socio-cultural 'reasonings'. Through my research for my Rural Development thesis I have come to understand the plastic bag issue in Burkina Faso as one that revolves around socio-cultural 'reasonings'. Therefore, while I know that the methods and methodology that the PMC uses are targeted towards population and health concerns, having done some reading I feel that they could potentially also be used in targeting this issue with plastic bags in Burkina Faso (as I believe that like the PMC approach the best way to create change is through addressing behaviour). What I would therefore like to investigate is whether indeed it is possible, to adapt the PMC methods and methodologies, to affect the change necessary.

The PMC website is fantastic and highly comprehensive, however I wanted to contact you to see if it would be possible ask some questions. About PMC, the methods and methodology, and whether you think they can be adapted to other topics outside of health and population.

Thank you very much for your time and I hope to hear back from you,

Torsten Lajoie Flyng

Appendix B:

Interview questions -
1) Is there a difference between propaganda and the Sabido Methodology? What are the differences?

2) I cannot suspect that I am the first to liken the methods that the PMC uses with those of propaganda, and I am sure that many approach the notion of propaganda through its historically negative tones, how does the PMC deal with this? For example, if the PMC wants to start a project, there are a fair few people I am sure have to be convinced of its efficacy.

3) Do people view this form of approaching behaviour change as an issue?

4) Do you think that the PMC methodologies/methods can be adapted to other social issues, then those the PMC [currently] addresses?

5) Do you think there are any negative aspects or draw backs to the methodology? Or if not anything directly negative then things that one has to be aware of when using the methodology?

6) How do you go about identifying and defining an issue/problem? And how does the PMC get involved in a country?

7) Do you have some examples outside of what the PMC has tackled that may be similar to the plastic garbage issue in Burkina Faso.

8) In reading the 2009 PMC Annual Report I got the impression that the environment was not really a priority as such but rather that positive outcomes for the environment was a product of addressing population growth (outside of the Gorilla project in Rwanda, which is really interesting, and a telenovela in Brazil). This I can certainly understand, however it makes me wonder, would a project such as mine, trying to address plastic garbage in Burkina Faso, fit within PMC objectives?

9) Are there other organizations such as the PMC that deals more closely with the environment and uses similar approaches/methods?