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Social Changes in South Africa: The Possibilities of Public Journalism and Development Journalism

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Sengupta and Esther Long's paper on *Sada – A New Player in Development Communication* will be a valuable reading for all those who are interested in innovative communication. In this context, the editor of JDC would like to invite more contributions from scholars and researchers who are currently involved or just completed similar research projects.

All over the world, fictional television capture the imagination of the public. It is no wonder that television has become an unavoidable and unreniting factor in shaping people's mind and, therefore, a most powerful tool for development communication. Yvonne MacPherson of the BBC World Service Trust has experience in producing TV serials to promote behaviour change relating to HIV and AIDS in India. Her article on "India Soap Operas and Reality TV Shows" is good example of how Indian soap operas put the important message across through entertainment among the masses.

SOCIAL CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE POSSIBILITIES OF PUBLIC JOURNALISM AND DEVELOPMENT JOURNALISM

Margaretha Geertsema

From a functionalist perspective, news informs citizens about what is going on in the world so that they can make informed decisions in a democracy. Not only does it inform, news also entertains and educates. In the Western model of journalism, the news media typically serve as a watchdog of the government.

However, the Western model of journalism has been under attack for some years. In the United States, scholars and journalists claim that the news media have become disconnected from their readers (Carey, 1999; Rosen, 1999). These scholars are saying journalism has failed in its aim of serving the public interest and instead recommend the practice of public journalism in a major shift away from the way journalism had traditionally been practiced in the West. In Third World countries, scholars have argued that the American model does not fit the developmental needs of these countries and that a development model of journalism should be devised to address these issues (Aggarwala, 1978; Edeani, 1993).

Public journalism, with its focus on local problems, could bring citizens in communities together to consider solutions in neighbourhoods. Development journalism, with its focus on national development, could give voice to the poorest of the poor in the country while emphasising cultural unity and political participation. A combination of development journalism and public journalism could strengthen the fabric of society and give direction in the transformation process.

South Africa, which is a combination of First World and Third World, is one of the countries in which the Western model of journalism is now questioned (De Beer, 2002; Mathaha, 2002). In South Africa, especially the English-language press has followed the Western model of journalism closely. However, in a time of major social changes South Africans are rethinking the role of the press. There is increasing pressure on the media to support the government's plans for national development and nation building, but some South African editors argue that they serve the public interest best by not necessarily serving the national interest (Anon., 2001). In a continuing situation of mistrust between the press and the government, officials often claim their activities are not receiving fair and balanced treatment from the press (De Beer, 2002).

The aim of this paper is firstly to provide an overview of the current debate about the role of the press in South Africa. Then, theoretical perspectives will

be utilised to inform this debate, and the possibilities of the interventionist models of public and development journalism in this context will be discussed more specifically.

The Current Debate Over the Role of the Press in South Africa

South Africa is facing enormous challenges and change. Until 1994, the white minority ruled through the Apartheid government while black resistance groups fought for justice and democracy. In the first democratic election in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) won almost two-thirds of votes, making it the first black government in the history of South Africa. In the midst of the democratic euphoria, the new government had to face tremendous social problems, including unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, AIDS, crime, violence and racial tension. The ANC successfully proposed its Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) as an election platform to address these issues, but frustrations are running high as change occurs slowly.

In the preamble to the new South Africa constitution (Act 108 of 1996), the government outlined four national goals, namely to:

1. heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;
2. lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;
3. improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and
4. build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations (www.concourt.gov.za/constitution/index/html)

With regard to the press, it is stated in section 16 of the Bill of Rights that "everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom of the press and other media" (www.concourt.gov.za/constitution/index/html).

In this context, questions are raised as to exactly how the news media should contribute to nation building and national development. For example, Eddings (2001) asks: "Should journalists investigate and report government missteps and abuses, or should they play a supportive role to enhance the chances of democratic success?"

Some are arguing for a model of journalism that would contribute to reconciliation and nation building. One proponent of development journalism is Mathatha Tsedu, former deputy editor of *The Star* newspaper and now deputy head of the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) television (Mathatha Mathaba, 2002). In an online article Mathatha quotes Tsedu: "Out of the 30 minutes bulletin, advertising, weather and other non-news take up about 12 minutes. Of the remaining 18 minutes, there are stories on robberies, hijackings and international news. Is there news about the ordinary South African struggling to better him or herself? None."

(www.rji.ru.ac.za/young_and_fresh/necessary_know_how_development_journalism_a_rethink_for_our_times.html). Tsedu continues:

I don't think journalism is necessarily about covering court cases or how many bank robberies or hijackings there have been. It is about highlighting what people are doing to help transform their lives. Whether they do this alongside government or on their own is immaterial. The premise that development journalism is necessarily government oriented is faulty. It is not about what Thabo (President Mbeke) is doing

Similarly, Blankenberg (2000) argues that the African philosophy of ubuntu (a term used to refer to African traditions) can be used to inform a type of liberation journalism that would combine elements of development journalism, participatory communication and other theories to create a journalism that would best serve the needs of African communities.

While some in the news media adopted a committed style of journalism to support the country in its transition, others are taken aback by the government's apparent expectations of favourable treatment. According to Matloff (1996), some senior government officials have made public appeals to journalists to write positive accounts of policies to promote national unity. In one instance, former President Nelson Mandela lashed out against black journalists for criticising government efforts to promote reconciliation. This situation can be particularly difficult for black journalists, who might be accused of acting against the national interest if they expose wrongdoing by the government (Steyn, 1994; Tsedu, 2000).

Some have expressed concern about this perceived threat to press freedom in South Africa (De Beer, 2002). Lara Kantor, director of the Independent Media Monitoring Project in Johannesburg, argues that where the SABC once was used to promote white supremacy and Apartheid, it now promotes national reconciliation and the Reconstruction and Development Program. According to Kantor, one ideology just replaced another (Lansner, 1995).

In terms of journalism education in South Africa, Megwa (2001) argues that in a time of soul searching, journalists should not be trained as objective observers, but as "active participants in the process of news production". News organisations, Megwa points out, will have to deal with issues of diversity in both the newsroom and in its content. He says:

... good journalism is not just journalism that relentlessly pursues the truth and holds government accountable and transparent. It is also journalism that promotes and encourages the participation of all South African citizens in public debate about governance, reconciliation, and reconstruction of lives broken by a hideous system of exclusion and deprivation.

In the next section, three theories of the press and their implications for journalism in South Africa will be discussed.

A Theoretical Framework for Journalism in South Africa: The Free Press Theory, Social Responsibility Theory and Development Media Theory

Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) introduced four theories of the press in what De Beer (1998) calls an "application of the idea that the political philosophy of a state has a direct bearing on the structure and functioning of the media system". The four theories identified by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) were the authoritarian theory, the libertarian theory, the Soviet media theory and the social-responsibility theory, the latter largely based on the work of the Hutchins Commission on the Freedom of the Press (1942-1947). Altschull (1995) pairs these theories together in two categories based on their ideologies, namely authoritarian and Soviet, and libertarian and social-responsibility. McQuail (1987) expands on the four theories, which he calls inapplicable to developing countries, by adding two theories: the development media theory and the democratic-participant theory.

In considering what a future South African press system might look like, Jackson (1993) argues that one "could quickly eliminate" the libertarian and Soviet media theories because they have minimal prospects of being adopted in South Africa. Indeed, in the 1980s South Africa pretty much followed the authoritarian theory when numerous restrictions applied to the freedom of the press. Instead of looking at what the South Africa media system "might" look like, this author is taking a more optimistic approach in discussing what the system "should" look like. As such, the authoritarian theory is not desirable because of its obvious limitations, neither is the Soviet media theory in which media cannot be privately owned. It will be argued here that the desired possibilities for South Africa range from the free press theory to the social responsibility theory and the development media theory. Public journalism and development journalism as interventionist models of the news might be particularly suitable for South Africa rather than the conventional free press-style journalism.

The free press theory

The American or Western model of journalism is based on the free press theory as set out by McQuail (1987), a theory that he calls a relabeled version of Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's libertarian theory (1956). According to McQuail, the libertarian theory is "widely regarded as the main legitimating principle for print media in liberal democracies".

In this regard, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) provide a useful summary of the essential elements of journalism, including a search for the truth, loyalty to citizens, independence, verification of news, comprehensible and proportional news, and monitoring of those in power. Curiously though, Kovach and Rosenstiel do not include objectivity as one of these elements. They argue that objectivity has lost its meaning.

Objectivity, however, has been a major element of American journalism since the 19th century. The shift from a partisan press to an objective press in the United States was induced mainly by economic interests. The Associated Press

needed to construct an objective version of news to distribute news stories to as many as possible subscribers (Campbell, 1998). Standard journalism textbooks in the United States still emphasise objectivity and detachment as key values of journalism (Fedler, 1997).

In this model, newsworthiness of stories is based on timeliness, importance, prominence, proximity and oddities/unusualness (Fedler, 1997; Rich, 2003). In addition, Rich identifies qualities of news stories as celebrities, human interest, conflict, impact, helpfulness, entertainment, trends, and issues or problems in the community. Hard news, which is the basic ingredient of the daily news media, is defined as "serious and timely stories about important topics," while soft news is described as "feature or human-interest stories" (Fedler, 1997). For hard news, the emphasis is mostly on events rather than on issues or processes.

This model of journalism has achieved a hegemonic status not only in the United States where mainstream news organisations follow this model, but also in developing countries (Golding, 1979). In South Africa, for example, these exact news values are taught in tertiary institutions, where journalism professors often use American or British textbooks. Similarly, in Nigeria, the Western model of journalism is reinforced through on-the-job training, training abroad, experts from industrialised nations who are sent to work there, university programmes, professional training institutes and foreign media role models (Jimada, 1992). It is important to realise, however, that this model of journalism has developed in a specific time and place, and that it may not necessarily be the best one for all countries at all times. Hard news, conflict, timeliness and a focus on events do not necessarily meet the informational needs of developing countries. In this regard, Jimada (1992) says, "we [Nigerians] still have to search for our own news values within the African world culture." This, I believe, might be true for South Africans too.

The conventional model of journalism does not have social change as a goal. However, social change might occur as a result of using this approach. Viswanath and Demers (1999) argue that traditional journalism could bring about social change as an institution when it promotes democracy and acts as a watchdog of the government and big business. Similarly, it could act to maintain the status quo, just as other social institutions like churches, schools and families could act to support the status quo. Therefore, Viswanath and Demers argue the mass media could be both agents of social control and social change and this could happen simultaneously.

Social responsibility theory

According to Altschull (1995) the social responsibility theory "remains the unofficial doctrine of the press," even though it is not well defined and largely ignored in practice (p. 144). Similarly, De Beer (1998) argues that the social responsibility system is "preferred in Anglo-American countries, and is also propounded by many as the ideal for South Africa". For example, Jackson (1993) states that the socially responsible system is likely to dominate, even though it would not flourish like in Western democracies. Jackson states that English-language papers in South Africa typically aspired to this standard, and that lately Afrikaans editors as well as alternative media editors are looking toward this

approach. Jackson concludes that South Africa will probably end up with a hybrid model based on the social responsibility model and the development model.

Among the conditions identified by De Beer (1998) for the social responsibility system to work effectively, are a tradition of a free press and "a relatively homogeneous population". It can be argued that neither of these are present in South Africa based on the heavy media restrictions during the Apartheid era and the heterogeneity of the population. However, it might be worthwhile to at least investigate what model of journalism would be practiced in line with the social responsibility theory.

Offering a rather bleak outlook for public journalism in the future, Blevins (1997) provides the connection between the Hutchins Commission's recommendations, Peterson's social responsibility theory of the press and the practice of public journalism in the 1990s. A valid criticism from Blevins is that people do not necessarily want to be guided by newspapers into problem solving and that public journalism as such can be seen as a form of paternalism toward readers. The work of Christians, Ferre and Fackler (1993) on communitarian journalism is also related to the social responsibility theory. Christians et al. argue that a press devoted to civic transformation aims to "liberate the citizenry, inspire acts of conscience, pierce the political fog, and enable the consciousness raising that is essential for constructing a social order through dialogue, mutually, in concert with out universal humanity.

Public journalism, also called civic journalism, community journalism or conversational journalism, aims to reconnect the news media with the community and to provide solutions for community problems (Charity, 1995; Glasse, 1991; Rosen, 1999; and Sirianni & Friedland, 2001). The public journalism movement's roots can be traced to John Dewey (1927), who in contrast to Walter Lippmann (1930), believed in the power of the public. Dewey argues that the public consists of a group of people who are affected in some way or the other and who then organise to protect themselves. Initially, Dewey argues, people took care of their own interests in a private way, but in the modern state officials such as judges and legislators hold this responsibility. Still, one would expect people to be engaged and involved in what is in their best interest. Another influence on the development of public journalism was the work of Jürgen Habermas on the public sphere (1989).

Since the 1990s, discussions of public journalism have dominated the field of journalism in the United States, and as many as 200 newspapers started implementing principles of public journalism in newsrooms across the country. The public journalism movement also attracted fierce criticism from more traditional media practitioners. Many argued that public journalism was exactly what they have been doing for many years without giving it a new label. Others contended that public journalism was breaking all rules of impartiality and should therefore be avoided. Examples of public journalism projects included yearlong series, a redesign of pages to include more voices of citizens, focus-groups, town-hall meetings, call-in-lines, letters from readers, surveys regarding pressing political issues and approaching controversial issues from different perspectives so improve readers' understanding of the topic (Rosen, 1999). It could be argued that a type of public journalism has been practiced in South Africa for many years through alternative media (Jackson, 1993; Seekings, 2000; and Van Kessel,

2000). Jackson puts it as follows:

Ridiculing the established papers' claim that they practice an "objective" approach to gathering and reporting news, the newer publications embrace a "committed" or "advocacy" journalism. Far from regarding themselves as neutral observers of the scene these papers openly embrace a viewpoint. They say that journalistic neutrality or objectivity is a myth under any circumstances; to claim to practice such journalism in South Africa is naive self-deception at best and outright dishonesty at worst.

A good case in point is the community newspaper *Grassroots*, where staff members were known as community organisers, not as journalists, as can be seen in this quote from Van Kessel (2000):

As an organising tool, Grassroots set itself the long-term goal of engaging local organisations in the struggle against the South African state. Bread-and-butter issues were a means to an end, stepping-stones in a process of mobilisation against racial and class oppression. The Grassroots staff did not perceive themselves primarily as journalists. Notions like objectivity and separation of news and comment belong to the realm of the 'bourgeois' liberal press, which served the interest of the ruling class ... Grassroots defined its constituency as the oppressed and exploited majority

Development Media Theory

There exists an apparent relationship between development media theory and the development goals of a country like South Africa in that this theory supports economic development, social change and nation building (De Beer, 1998; McQuail, 1987). Some of the key aspects of development media theory (or developmental theory as De Beer calls it), are that the media should accept responsibility for development tasks and prioritise national language and culture in its content (McQuail, 1987). De Beer (1998) adds: "The overriding implication of the developmental system is that there should be a basic mass media devotion to economic, political, cultural and social development as a primary national task. All institutions (including the media system) should be committed to this end". In terms of limitations, McQuail (1987) points out that media freedom can be restricted based on economic priorities and development needs. This restriction might include state intervention, censorship, subsidy or even direct control. Jackson (1993) contends that South Africa is unlikely to adopt the development theory because of the existing traditions of the mainstream press. He argues: "The strong orientation to the social responsibility approach held by the most powerful papers will make it difficult for any government to promote developmental journalism beyond modest levels". He does contend though that elements of development journalism should be incorporated into the future press of South Africa.

Even though development media theory is dissimilar to Marxist-Leninist

theory and authoritarian theory, the philosophy of the development media theory can be traced back to Marxist theorising about the role of the press. Marx regarded the media as part of the superstructure that the ruling class used to maintain power, together with other ideological institutions such as churches, schools and the government. As such, Marx argued that the task of the press was to overthrow the capitalist system (Altschull, 1995). Marx was against journalists as objective reporters, because objectivity "was denying the possibility of change" (Altschull, 1995). Instead, journalists have to work for social change.

In the following section, it will become clear that journalists working in the development media theory model are not passive reporters but active organisers for a political cause.

In contrast to the traditional free press model of journalism, development journalism and public journalism are both interventionist models (Shaffer, 1998). This means both these models are deliberately aimed at bringing about social change, in contrast with the traditional detached Western model of journalism.

In explicating the meaning of development journalism, it might be useful to first take a closer look at the concept of development. It should be acknowledged up front that the term "development" is highly controversial, as many development projects have had detrimental outcomes in developing countries. Instead of "developing" these countries, development policies have often led to an increase in poverty and unemployment. Esteva (1992) draws development discourse back to the inauguration of President Truman on January 20, 1949, when two billion people became "underdeveloped" as Truman announced plans for a programme of development. Development discourse told two-thirds of the people in the world of "*what they are not*. It is a reminder of an undesirable, undignified condition. To escape from it, they need to be enslaved to others' experiences and dreams" (cursive in original, Esteva, 1992). As such, development is typically frowned upon today as neo-colonialism, even if more participatory models are implemented. A more egalitarian vision of development is offered by Shah and Gayatri (1994) in the following definition: Development is "an ongoing participatory process within a society through which the society achieves a fulfilment of its basic needs and/or improvement of its quality of life according to its own destiny".

While keeping the contested nature of development in account, the usefulness of development journalism and development communication should still be considered. These two terms are sometimes used as synonyms (Ogan, 1982), however, they have separate origins and definitions. Development communication, according to Wilkins (2000), is "the strategic application of communication technologies and processes to promote social change". Development communication in the United States originated around the 1940s through the studies of Lerner (1962) and Schramm (1963), who argued that mass media could help bring about development in developing countries. Development communication can take place through a variety of forms of communication, including interpersonal communication, theatre, and mass communication, and in this way development journalism is a smaller part of development communication.

In contrast, development journalism had its roots in Asia in the 1960s (Gunaratne & Hasim, 1996; McKay, 1993; Ogan, 1982; Shaffer, 1998; Shah, 1992;

and Sussman, 1978). Journalists associated with the Press Foundation of Asia in Manila and communication scholars started using the catch phrase "developmental journalism" (Gunaratne & Hasim, 1996) or "development journalism/communication" (Ogan, 1982). These scholars and practitioners organised courses and workshops on development journalism in Manila, Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and other cities.

Defining development journalism, however, is difficult. In a meta-research case study of development journalism, Fair (1988) found that there was no consensus in terms of conceptualising development journalism among the 20 studies analysed. In three cases, development journalism was conceptualised as "any news that relates to the primary, secondary or tertiary needs of a country's population". In another three cases, it was seen as "news that satisfies the needs of a country's population and contributes to self-reliance". In yet another two studies, development journalism was conceptualised as "news that related to development or to social, economic or political problems". In two instances, development journalism was described as "positive or good news" and in one case it was defined as "news for neo-literates". Fair found that in nine cases, no conceptual definition was given. However, in 18 studies operational definitions were presented. Most often, development journalism was operationalised by "topics or categories of news that were considered to be development journalism". The description of development news that is most often used is that of Aggarwala (1979):

It is not identical with "positive" news. In its treatment, development news is not different from regular news or investigative reporting. It can deal with development issues at macro and micro levels and can take different forms at national and international levels. In covering the development newsbeat, a journalist should critically examine, evaluate, and report the relevance of a development project to national and local needs, the difference between a planned scheme and its actual implementation, and the differences between its impact on people as claimed by government officials and as it actually is.

Shah (1992) discusses advocacy, people orientation and a holistic approach as characteristics of development news based on Aggarwala's description.

Similar to criticisms of early development communication models as being top-down, traditional Western journalism has also been criticised for its focus on government officials and other elites. In describing development news as people oriented, Shah (1992) includes people who are affected by development as news sources in a bottom-up style of reporting. Development journalism, it might be argued, is setting out to follow the dialogical approach of Freire (1983), where the journalist (sender) becomes the listener (receiver) and the receiver (those affected most by development) becomes the sender. An example of empowering the voiceless in society is the work of Indian journalist Palagummi Sathya, who sees it as his task to write stories of the poorest and most downtrodden people of India (Hardie, 2002). Likewise, in South Africa, Mathatha Tsedu believes journalists should focus on the poor and the weak (Mathatha, 2002). Unfortunately, as can be seen in a study by Shah (1990), typical news sources in development

news, "were men in government positions who belong to the party in power. Few of these sources were critical of development plans, projects, policies, problems or issues". Ogan, Fair and Shah (1984) recommended a greater use of critical sources and less dependence on the government as the only source of information.

In another study, Shah and Gayatri (1994) operationalised development news according to the criteria from Basic Outline, an Indonesian document that outlines the role for the country's mass media in the development process. According to this outline, the mass media have a duty to:

Arouse the spirit of dedication to national aspiration; strengthen national unity and integration; fortify the sense of responsibility and national discipline; increase awareness of rights and duties of citizens; consolidate national cultural values to reinforce Indonesian identity; educate the people; develop social communication as well as social aspiration, and stimulate social participation in national development.

These values are clearly different from those of traditional detached Western journalism and could be applicable to the South African situation.

It is important to distinguish development journalism as conceptualised here from developmental journalism and development support communication (DSC) (or developmental writing as Janias, 1986, calls it). According to Sussman (1978), developmental journalism is the idea that governments have to control the media to achieve national development. This is in contrast with the idea of development communication, which was "nongovernmental in origin and practice" (Sussman, 1978). Literature on development journalism is somewhat confusing on this point, because the terms "development journalism" and "developmental journalism" are sometimes used interchangeably when the authors, in my opinion, really have the other term in mind (for example above when Gunaratne and Hasim, 1996, used the term "developmental journalism," also see Anon, 2001, Fitzgerald, 1990, Donatob & Hall, 1983, and Murthy, 2001). This might be an indication of conceptual confusion or simply of the highly contested nature of this form of journalism.

Perhaps the harshest criticism of what Sussman (1978) calls developmental journalism comes from Donatob and Hall (1983), who say in "development journalism" the "state fashions and tailors the news to conform to the needs and public policy of the day". As a result, African politicians end up controlling the media for their own political goals. For example, Donatob and Hall point out that in several francophone African states, it is impossible to even "criticise the President, his family and the military". Similarly, Fitzgerald (1990) describes "development journalism" as "the idea that the press should be cheerleaders for developing Third World nations".

On the other hand, DSC is a term used to replace "development communication" as based on the earlier dominant paradigm. According to Melkote and Steeves (2001), practitioners started using DSC to indicate a change in focus from a top-down, authoritarian way of communicating development to a horizontal relationship of sharing information between participants. Whereas development communication took place on the international and national levels,

DSC is taking place on local and grassroots levels. Big media, such as radio, television and newspapers, were employed in development communication, whereas smaller media, traditional media and interpersonal communication are used in DSC. In contrast with development journalism, which is practiced by either independent news media that willingly buy into the government's plans or government-controlled news media that are forced to practice development journalism, DSC typically originates from national development programme initiated by governments or development agencies.

The problem, with developmental journalism or DSC, is that it can be seen as a form of "government say-so journalism" (Ogan, 1982). To differentiate between developmental journalism (and DSC) and development journalism, Ogan argues that the latter could be categorised under the social responsibility theory of the press and the former under the authoritarian theory of the press.

In a relatively recent article on development journalism, Shah (1996) argues that "emancipatory journalism" should replace the outdated and contested term "development journalism". Shah's argument is that in the dominant paradigm of development communication, the assumption was that people would become modern once they understood a sense of nation-ness (space) and change their focus to the future, punctuality and long-term planning (time). However, the actual effects of the introduction of modernisation in developing communities were that people lost their sense of space and time, resulting in existential anxiety and feelings of emptiness. Thus emancipatory journalism should be introduced to re-establish this sense of time and space and to empower people to transform social structures. Shah seems to propose yet another position for journalism, one that can be seen as a blend between development journalism (top-down) and DSC (bottom-up).

From the above, it is clear that there are several differences and similarities between public journalism and development journalism as interventionist news models. In contrast with development journalism, which is used for journalism in Third World countries, its younger cousin, public journalism (Gunaratne & Hasim), is a form of journalism that originated in the United States. Whereas the focus of development journalism is on national development and macrostructural change, public journalism is micro-oriented and focuses on local problems in communities, for example neighbourhood crime, racial tension, or unemployment (Shafer, 1998).

Gunaratne and Hasim (1996) identified several similarities between development journalism and public journalism. Both these forms of journalism emerged out of the realisation that conventional Western journalism does not contribute to nation building or community building. Similarly, both forms want to emphasise the civic successes of the country or community, which in some cases led to charges against both as feel-good journalism. Development journalism is aimed at nation building and the promotion of democracy just as public journalism aims to improve civic life and democracy. Development journalism wants to give voice to the underprivileged in developing countries, while public journalism wants to involve ordinary citizens in public debate. In both development journalism and public journalism, the journalist assumes an active role in encouraging citizens to work together to solve urban or rural problems. Finally, in both forms of journalism the journalist becomes a participant in public

life instead of a detached observer. On the downside, Shafer (1998) argues that in both development journalism and public journalism, journalists do not have sufficient resources or time to address the structural roots of problems.

Although there is no evidence of public journalism being used for development in Third World countries, Shah (1992) has considered using there is "great potential for rural newspapers to contribute in a positive way to humane development in the rural United States" despite some problems. It can be argued that public journalism could also contribute to problem solving in Third World countries.

Discussion

In this paper, it has been argued that both public journalism and development journalism as interventionist press models could be implemented in South Africa to help with community connectedness and nation building. The traditional Western press model does not offer a constructive framework for change and reconciliation because journalists remain detached, skeptical and disinterested. To heal the wounds of South Africa, journalists need to step outside of their comfort zones and become activists for social change. "Public journalism, with its focus on local problems, could bring citizens in communities together to consider solutions in neighbourhoods. Development journalism, with its focus on national development, could give voice to the poorest of the poor in the country while emphasising cultural unity and political participation. A combination of development journalism and public journalism could strengthen the fabric of society and give direction in the transformation process".

Having proposed these two forms of journalism for South Africa, this paper is not recommending developmental journalism. To only emphasise the positive aspects of a society, while ignoring burning issues, could only lead to disaster. It is crucial for the press to remain independent from government control and to operate freely and fearlessly.

Since newspapers are privately owned in South Africa, it is doubtful whether editors and managers would be interested in public journalism or development journalism unless there would be a financial incentive. The case is different with the South African Broadcasting Corporation, which might be able to implement some of these strategies as part of its public responsibility to license payers.

Sadly, these alternative forms of journalism might at best be wishful thinking and at worst idealistic naivete, as journalists in South Africa are struggling with much more basic issues. In a recent study conducted on behalf of the South African National Editors Forum, Steyn and De Beer (2004) found that news editors thought reporters lacked basic journalistic skills. Future training, De Beer recommends, should focus on the "very basic elements of news writing, such as getting the 5 Ws and the H right; getting to grips with the elements of news values; correct use of names and titles; and reporting correctly on the basic facts of a story". Similarly, Jackson (1993) points out that except for issues of press freedom, journalists are ill equipped for their tasks and there is a general lack of careful thinking about journalism in South Africa.

In addition, in a country where illiteracy varies between 27 percent in

metropolitan areas and 50 percent in rural areas (Underwood, 2002), one might question the impact of news media, especially of newspapers. Radio and television news perhaps has a better chance of making a difference. Another factor to keep in mind is that South Africa currently has 11 official languages, a situation that makes it extremely difficult to provide news to every citizen in his or her home language.

At the end of the day, South African editors will probably argue that conventional journalism standards offer the best solution for South Africa's problems. It was the aim of this paper, however, to at least consider and highlight some of the possibilities of a more activist approach to journalism.

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