This is the published version:


Available from Deakin Research Online:

http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30051414

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner

Copyright : 2010, University of Queensland : School of English, Media Studies & Art History
THE PROMISE OF A NEW MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Abstract

The role of the press is underpinned by a concern for public welfare, and the discourses and debates in journalism practice and theory stem from the notion that the press is one of the pillars of a democracy and an essential element of the public sphere (Rosen, 2005; Dahlgren and Sparks, 1991). The public sphere, in turn, is linked to the theory of modernisation and the development agenda of a society, where the media are expected to play an important function as watchman, policy disseminator and teacher (Schramm, 1964). This article looks at citizen journalism’s potential to provide yet another opportunity to disadvantaged communities in India to communicate with the world, via information and communication technologies. The new media also open up the possibility of these earlier disenfranchised communities becoming partners in the country’s development and democratic agenda. This is a discussion paper based on a survey of initiatives undertaken by various community groups in India to provide a voice to local communities who would otherwise remain silent. It explores the impact of these citizen journalism initiatives on local communities vis-à-vis their effectiveness as a tool for development and social change, and argues that the growth and success of these initiatives around the world, though piecemeal, should become an important part of discourse concerning the role of journalism in society.

Introduction

Over the past decade, there have been several occasions when citizen journalism has emerged or come to the forefront around crisis reporting, when individuals at the right time and at the right place have been able to capture the moment and pass it on to established media, and now increasingly to other networked audiences directly via the internet or on their mobile phones. In recent years, citizen journalism – or journalism by non-professionals – has become a common addition to the main media and sometimes even an alternative to a largely ratings-driven journalism. Notable examples have included blogging by Salam Pax in Iraq, recording of the London bombings on mobiles, reporting and sharing of information by citizens during the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, and last year sharing of details of the two day-long Mumbai siege via Twitter.

However, a number of case studies around the world point to the fact that citizen journalism is not just about witnesses reporting news during crisis times, but also about being active participants in social change. Jessica Dheere (2008), a citizen journalism academic from Beirut, says that some of these citizen journalists reject the label of being journalists ‘because they often see themselves as taking a more active role in the news than
simply reporting it. They are often instigators of change in the first place.’ In this article, using the example of video volunteers, I explore the idea that the practice of information technology-assisted ‘citizen journalism’ needs to be seen as a means for development and social change in developing countries such as India because it provides a voice to local communities, and highlights and solves their day-to-day issues – a role usually assigned to mainstream local media. The article borrows from Hartley’s discussion about journalism as a human right (2008) to argue that – like mainstream development policy-makers and researchers, who need to better understand of the role of alternative and citizen media in challenging the structural causes of poverty and exclusion (Petit et al., 2009) – media researchers and practitioners need to recognise the value of empowering citizens to report on local issues and the impact of this on development and social change.

A special issue of Development in Practice on ‘Alternative Media and Development’ notes that while the growth of alternative and citizen media and communication initiatives has been promising, in reality these are poorly understood in the mainstream of development policy and practice due to a huge diversity of initiatives that come under the label of alternative and citizens’ media and communication (Petit et al., 2009). These authors also argue that, despite well-developed theories and case studies related to alternative and citizen media (Downing, 2001; Rodriguez 2001; Stein et al., 2008), these are not as familiar to the mainstream of development research, policy and practice:

The role of alternative and citizens’ media as processes of communication, dialogue, and self-expression, by which people can create their own knowledge and alternative sources of power, is not widely understood. (Petit et al., 2009: 444).

Similarly, the notion of journalism as a human right (Hartley, 2008) is not common in academic discourse, although it has been discussed elsewhere. Hartley (2008: 42) quotes Ian Hargreaves from his 1999 lecture on British journalism, in which he emphasised the role of citizens as journalists: ‘In a democracy everyone is a journalist. This is because, in a democracy, everyone has the right to communicate a fact or a point of view, however trivial, however hideous.’ Hartley refers to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which emphasises that everyone has a right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas (2008: 42). He says that although journalism – like politics – has become professionalised, corporatised and a specialised occupation, in this era of interactive and collaborative media, journalism is transforming into an open system of ‘many-to-many’ communication (2008: 42–44). Within this reality of the changing nature of journalism, one can argue that empowering citizens to gather, report and present their local news also provides them with a platform to solve their own problems stemming from ignorance, corruption and a lack of the basic amenities and infrastructure necessary for development and growth.

The practice of citizen journalism in projects like the Video Volunteers initiative in India provides a chance to foster and train community leaders and activists, who in turn instigate social change in consultation with their own communities. Here, ‘citizen journalism’ is defined as journalism practised by members of the general public as opposed to media professionals. This definition of citizen journalism is captured by Jay Rosen (2008): ‘When the people formerly known as the audiences employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another, that’s citizen journalism.’ The meaning of the word ‘citizen’ is used to capture the concept of an ‘ordinary person’, rather than the meaning of a citizen of a nation state.

In different parts of India, Video Volunteers are coming together to make short films on local issues, which they screen in their communities to effect social change. These films are then uploaded to YouTube, screened on television and shown at film festivals, in an attempt to tell their stories and to highlight issues of concern to their communities.
One of the video volunteers, Zulekha Sayyad, aged 19, lives in the Ghatkopar (Mumbai) Parkside slums. She talks about her life now as a community producer, and her childhood (translated):

I am a community producer. Before this I was in school. I live with my mother and grandmother. My mother worked as a maid to raise me. I have gone through many difficult times. When I was little we often had nothing to eat. I used to pick up things from the roadside to eat. We had no electricity and so we lit lamps in order to study. Our roof needed mending and during the monsoon there was water everywhere. In spite of my mother’s poor financial status, she was always working extra to pay for my schooling instead of staying at home. I could never call my friends over because they had model homes. I feel that nobody should have a life like mine. But if you get one like this, then you should become a producer in Hamari Awaz (Our Voice) community video (unit) so that you can spend your life learning happily like me. (www.videovolunteers.org)

Another video volunteer with the Manyam Praja community unit, Laxmi from Addateegala village, talks about the respect she receives from the villagers for taking up their issues (translated):

I used to work as a voluntary teacher, now I am a community producer. When I saw the camera for the first time, I thought it would be very easy to make photographs. Then I learned about how powerful it was. We know that mainstream actors and actresses could make films, but now the Tribals are making their own films. I am so happy that I am working on these projects. When we went to Jaderu village, people complained to us that their ration shop salesman was not coming regularly. They complained that they were not getting the commodities on time. We made a film on this and showed it to the higher officials. Within one week, the salesman was suspended. Now, whenever we go to the village they are thankful and treat us with great respect. (www.videovolunteers.org)

These Video Volunteers learn filmmaking at special workshops, then return to their villages or bastis (settlements) to find out the dominant issue or topic of concern. A team of volunteers interviews the villagers about the issue, edits them into a short film, and then screens them in the village. Often these solution-oriented media films and their screening result in further conversation among villagers/community members, and even prompt government and other professionals to do their job and rectify the problem upon which the film has focused, such as repairing a broken water pipe, compelling a corrupt officer to finish his work without a bribe, or convincing a doctor to return to the village to perform his duties. Some even try to mitigate entrenched issues like breaking caste barriers in a village. These Video Volunteers are trained and supported by local and overseas non-government organisations and their representatives, who have realised the power of information technology and the internet in facilitating mass communication and mass dissemination, bypassing the main media gatekeepers.

Video Volunteers, a United States-based non-government organisation, was founded by Jessica Mayberry in 2006 with Drishti, an Indian media, arts and human rights organisation, to empower local communities. Over the past three years, Video Volunteers has created 15 Community Video Units (CVU), trained 150 producers from local communities, and produced 60 video magazines and 50 other films, which have been screened 1100 times to about 200,000 people in 350 villages and slums, resulting in 2000 people taking direct action (www.videovolunteers.org/impact). The program, which is focused on ‘capacity building’ at the local level, works with non-government organisations and individuals, training them to produce and screen their videos in villages and slums, and video blog
to global audiences via YouTube and an internet channel, Channel 19 (www.channel19.org) – inspired by Article 19 of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Some of the funding for the program comes from overseas, while the rest is from local non-government organisations, with a plan to make each CVU self-sufficient. By training local community producers, the foundation team wants to bring out new thoughts and solutions to local issues, making them more than citizen journalists – they become community leaders and activists who instigate social change in consultation with their own communities by conducting surveys, interviews and organising group discussions.

There are other projects in community media where middle-class professionals have launched projects to assist local communities to use new technologies to tell their stories. One such project was initiated by Sweta Singh, a former journalist and now academic. It is called MYOWN, and its goal is to train women panchayat (community) leaders in Bihar, one of the most backward states in India, to talk about their issues and assist them in publishing a video blog so that their concerns are highlighted (Singh, 2008: 1). Singh says that the mainstream media ‘suffers from a bias towards urban, educated, high-class male audiences’, and therefore wants to ‘make media use as democratic as possible and include marginalised groups especially women in the process of development’ (2008: 3). Similarly, a small number of community radio initiatives are attempting to make a difference at hyper-local level. One of the most talked about examples of community radio is Namma Dhwani (Our Voices) – a community radio station in Budikote village, about 100 kilometres from Bangalore city in southern India (Mukhopadhyay, 2004). Namma Dhwani is a result of collaboration between VOICES, a media advocacy group, MYRADA, a grassroots-level non-government organisation and the community members of Budikote. Namma Dhwani cablecasts programs on a regular basis on topics ranging from family values to income-generation programs. It also provides media training to other local groups in the area, earning valuable income for the community radio station. However, the growth of community radio is being hampered by the Indian government’s laissez-faire policies and lack of funding on the ground for start-ups, despite its potential to reach and involve a significant number of people in the development agenda (Sen, 2009). Sen points out that although the government has a policy of encouraging community radio stations in the country, ‘it has been cautious, and its implementation (of its policy) has been half-hearted and grudging’.

Meanwhile, a number of citizen journalism websites have been launched in recent years, including Merinews.com, WhiteDrums.com, MyNews.in, MeriKhabar.com, Csplash.com and Kanglaonline.com among others. Merinews.com (launched in October 2005) claims to be the first citizen journalism news portal in India, ‘emanating from the need to empower democracy by providing a media to the people of the country to communicate with one and all’ (Merinews.com, 2009). Then there are blogs, which became prominent during signpost events such as the 2005 Asian tsunami, the Mumbai terrorist attacks in November 2008 and the Indian general elections in April–May 2009. The list includes journalists, media personalities, doctors, artists, sports and film stars, as well as individuals who support their own blogging website such as Instablogs.com founded by Pramit Singh, and Gauravonomics.com, a weblog on social media and social change created by Gaurav Mishra. Mishra also launched a campaign during the last general election – Vote Report India – to build a grassroots movement in India with a view to encouraging citizens to exercise their voting rights (Gauravonomics.com, 2009). Not-for-profit organisations such as multilingual website Global Voices Online, funded by a number of philanthropic groups and run by a community of bloggers, aim to ‘redress some of the inequities in media attention by leveraging the power of citizens’ media’ (Globalvoicesonline.org, 2009).
Mainstream media and development

However, it is the mainstream media that still have the reach and the audience numbers to potentially carry the message of development and social change. Unlike their counterparts in more developed nations, India’s mainstream media have been growing over the past two decades. At present, there are nearly 450 television channels, which reach some 500 million viewers in the country (Indiantelevision.com, 2009a). There are also more than 500 radio stations, just under half of which are owned by All India Radio – one of the two public service broadcasters in the country (Indiantelevision.com, 2009b). According to the State of Newspaper Scene 2007 report, some 6800 daily newspapers and around 62,500 periodical newspapers are published in India (Press Council of India, 2008: 7). However, some commentators believe that the Indian news media as a whole, as big as the industry is, consists of ‘95 per cent drivel and 5 per cent news’, while others believe that, due to intense competition, the quality of Indian journalism has deteriorated: ‘The obsession of the news media with political circus and horse-trading, with crises and violence, on the one hand, and with 15-minute celebrities, on the other hand, has taken its toll.’ (Upadhyay, CEO and editor-in-chief of merinews.com, in Roy, 2008) P. Sainath, an award-winning rural journalist, says the media’s coverage of farmers’ plight in India is disgraceful, and is driven by profits rather than good journalism:

You have less than six journalists covering the Vidharbha [agrarian] crisis in the middle of 2006, but you have more than 500 journalists covering the Lakhme India fashion week in Mumbai. They [media] don’t believe Vidharbha farmers make revenue for them. (Sainath, in Garyali 2007: 1)

Others disagree. Arindam Sengupta (2009), the executive editor of The Times of India – the largest selling English newspaper in the country – says that ‘journalism has improved in India’ … it has become more attuned to local issues, more accountable to its audience by providing hyper-local coverage. Similarly, Chandan Mitra (2009), the editor of The Pioneer newspaper, points to the dichotomy between the standard of journalism in print and electronic media:

Over the past five years, print media has become much more responsible than before, whereas electronic media tends to go over the top because of this intense competition to be the first with the news. There is this need to break news with a new angle every 15 minutes. In the process, there is also this unsubstantiated news, rumours, highly exaggerated reports in electronic media, especially as you have something as dramatic and sensational like the Mumbai terrorist attacks. (Mitra, 2009)

Commentators make a distinction between print and electronic media when describing their views about the quality of contemporary journalism. However, for consumers – who continue to refer to the media in collective terms – this distinction is perhaps not as well articulated. Due to the general dissatisfaction with the mainstream media, coupled with relatively easier access to new media technology compared with the past, some concerned citizens have launched their own citizen journalism and blogging sites, while others now use social media sites such as YouTube, Twitter and Flickr to report their news and views. However, access to technology and the internet is still a privilege, and is far from usual for a large proportion of the country’s population, who struggle to meet their basic daily needs. Furthermore, this section of the population is already inadequately served by mainstream media due to intense competition and commercialisation of the media in India (Garyali, 2007; Rodrigues, 2009; Singh, 2008; Upadhyay, in Roy, 2008).
Media needs of a diverse population

Although India’s gross domestic product (GDP) has been growing at an enviable rate of between 8 and 10 per cent in recent years, with a growing middle-class population of about 600–650 million, there are still up to 350 million people who live below the poverty line (Asian Development Bank, 2002). According to Kothari, there are two Indias. One comprises the urban and rural elite, the big farmers, the industrialists, the bureaucrats, the executives and professionals, and the intelligentsia. Meanwhile, the other is impoverished, malnourished, toiling day and night for survival; it includes the poor, the untouchables, the tribals, the backward classes, the lower castes, but also a large section of the religious minorities and women (Kothari, 1988a, 1988b, 1993). In 2000, in his Republic Day speech, Indian President K.R. Narayanan articulated the impact of this disparity:

We have one of the world’s largest reservoirs of technical personnel, but also the world’s largest number of illiterates; the world’s largest middle class, but also the largest number of people below the poverty line and the largest number of children suffering from malnutrition. Our giant factories rise from out of squalor; our satellites shoot up from the midst of the hovels of the poor. Not surprisingly, there is a sullen resentment among the masses against their condition, erupting often in violent forms in several parts of the country. Tragically, the growth in our economy has not been uniform. It has been accompanied by great regional and social inequalities. (Narayanan, 2000)

Since Independence in 1947, the media have been seen as one of the tools of development in India. In the 1950s and 1960s, Indian political leaders – including the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru – were greatly influenced by writings about the role of mass media in national development. Based on early studies, communication scholars believed that mass media had a ‘magic multiplier’ effect in increasing the level of development in less developed nations (Rogers, 1976). Lerner (in Singh 2003) linked the concept of modernity with communication by arguing that the Western model (including the population’s state of mind) could be reproduced anywhere in the world by mass media’s dissemination of modern ideas, images and values. Schramm (1964) saw information play an important role as an agent of change and modernisation. He argued that mass media could be used to impart information by playing three important roles: as watchman, policy-maker and teacher. He contended that, as national development got underway, information would need to be available on demand so that expert knowledge was available where needed (Schramm, 1964: 43). In this argument, the existence of traditional beliefs and practices was seen as an impediment to modernisation, which was considered a prerequisite for economic growth. Rogers and Hart (2003: 266) define the core elements of the ‘development communication’ paradigm. First, it involves the notion that mass media can deliver ‘informative and motivational’ messages to large audiences in developing countries. Second, there is research-based evidence that exposure to these messages can alter people’s attitudes, knowledge and behaviour towards economic growth and social betterment. The ultimate aim of development strategies is to modernise a society in a way opposed to ‘tradition’. It is a condition that is disconnected from the past, which through a process of social and cultural change makes life in the present different from and better than life in the past.

As a result, the Indian government retained control of the two public service broadcasters in the country and did not allow private ownership of the Indian broadcast media for nearly three decades from the 1950s until the early 1990s. The two public broadcasters – Doordarshan and All India Radio – expanded their reach to more than 90 per cent of the population, but were criticised for their ‘dull and boring’ programs and for being the
government’s mouthpiece due to interference in their day-to-day functioning from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. As a result, the expansion and privatisation of the broadcasting industry in India in the 1990s was seen as a positive move towards democracy and choice for the individual rather than an abandonment of public service broadcasting (Pendakur and Kapur, 1997: 196). Although the Indian government carried a number of programs spreading the message of development through the 1970s and 1980s – including the importance of sending children to school, health warnings, new farming techniques and women’s status in society – these messages were presented in a dull and timid way, causing many people to switch off (Gupta, 1998), and often the local socio-economic and political conditions were not conducive to providing appropriate follow-ups needed for the implementation of these messages in practice. Even in academic circles, the result of this paradigm of ‘development for communication’ was criticised for generating ‘inequality and under-development’ by accelerating the Westernisation and urbanisation of traditional societies (Servaes and Malikhao, 2003: 7). Rogers (1976) broadened the definition of communication for development from one that centred on materialistic economic growth to one focused on other social values such as social advancement, equality and freedom. Rogers summarises the concept as:

a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment (Rogers, in Melkote, 1991: 193).

New efforts in participatory communication

Over the past three decades, the discussion about the development communication approach has gone through several name changes and evolved into something akin to ‘participatory communication for social change’. In 2005, Silvio Waisbord, a sociologist who has written extensively about global media and the media’s developmental role in Latin America and Africa, made an attempt to articulate the strategic and programmatic agreements among development communication theorists. Waisbord put forward five key ideas in his ‘participatory communication for social change’ approach:

1. The centrality of power. Community empowerment should be the main goal of interventions; individuals and communities become empowered by gaining knowledge about specific issues, communicating about issues of common concern, making decisions for themselves and negotiating power relations.

2. The integration of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The 1950s and 1960s top-down model that put government and a network of Western experts in charge of development programs has been discredited. Since then there has been a swing towards community-based approaches. However, Waisbord says this does not mean that governments do not have a role to play – in fact, it is the level of priority given by the government that affects the success of a communication intervention – for example, in case of polio eradication in the world (UNAID, 2000). A commitment from central and local governments to specific development issues has proven to be indispensable for scaling-up projects at the national level.

3. The need to use a communication ‘toolkit’ approach. Practitioners have recognised the need for a multiplicity of communication strategies to improve the quality of life in communities. Mass media interventions may be useful for reaching a large population in critical situations, but community participation is necessary to achieve lasting engagement and change in relation to multidimensional issues such as education, sanitation and family planning.
4. The articulation of interpersonal and mass communication. A number of successful interventions suggest integrated communication strategies that extend from transmission to participatory methods and approaches will mediate social change more powerfully. The media are extremely important when it comes to raising awareness and knowledge of a given problem, and generate conversation among audiences. However, it is through social networks that the adoption and adaptation, not just diffusion, of new ideas occurs. UNAID’s 1999 communication framework also recommends the integration of multimedia and interpersonal communication for social change.

5. The incorporation of personal and contextual factors. Understanding the role of individual and environmental factors, such as gender and culture, is vital to understanding the role of public communication in influencing social change. For example, access to condoms does not necessarily lead to any increase in condom use; therefore, it is important to understand the contextual or environmental factors that may influence behaviour, and that need to be addressed.

So how do citizen journalism initiatives such as Video Volunteers fit into this description of ‘participatory communication for social change’, as outlined by Waisbord? The Video Volunteers initiative integrates a top-down and bottom-up approach by setting a plan of action for local volunteers, who in turn implement it in accordance with local needs. It empowers communities by training local volunteers, who consult with their communities about issues of concern. It uses mass communication (film screening) and interpersonal communication (surveys, interviews and discussion after the screening) channels to instigate change. It uses a communication ‘toolkit’ approach – at the community level, inexpensive media technologies are used to engage communities, yet the internet (mass media) is used to further raise awareness of their successes (Channel 19, YouTube) and raise funds for the continuation of the program. It incorporates personal and contextual factors – Video Volunteers are part of the community, so they understand the contextual factors that may affect behaviour change.

However, as already noted, early communication for development approaches failed because ‘the path from [communicating] information to attitude [change] to practice does not run straight’ (Waisbord, 2005: 83). Similarly, the enthusiasm for ‘new information technologies’, and their capacity to promote dialogue, exchange of ideas and participation, has moderated. Case studies of government-funded information and communication technologies (ICTs) indicate that technological change benefits the well-off and middle classes more than it does the rural poor (Sreekumar, 2008). However, Waisbord says although participatory approaches have challenged old conventions successfully, there still remain questions such as the following: Under what conditions is participation possible? What happens when participatory ideals run counter to community norms or are rejected by local authoritarian practices? How is participation possible at different stages of a development program (for example, funding, planning, evaluation, sustainability)? In Australia, members of a group of researchers who have worked on a number of participatory media projects suggest that participatory culture is ‘almost impossible to achieve in the absence of predetermined stakeholder agendas in developments and investments in it’ (Spurgeon et al., 2009: 284). In a theoretical discussion about digital storytelling as a platform for researching and developing participatory culture, Spurgeon and colleagues (2009: 275) define ‘co-creative media’ as a tool to describe ‘the ways in which participatory media are facilitated by people and organisations, not just technology’. The authors illustrate how the institutional context of production, the involvement of experts and their knowledge, and the availability of resources for producing and distributing digital stories can influence the content, purpose and outcomes of participatory media experiments. They define this kind of digital storytelling projects as a ‘co-creative form of participatory media practice’, rather than being a solely bottom-up process aided by technology (Spurgeon et al., 2009: 278).
This combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches has the potential to empower local communities by providing them expert knowledge and technological resources to gather and report their news stories – as in the case of Video Volunteers, where a United States-based non-government organisation has joined hands with an Indian media, arts and human rights organisation.

Forde (2009), in her attempt to define ‘alternative journalism’ – which includes grassroots practices of independent and community media – says citizen journalists are ‘practising journalism in ways that are engaging audiences, including ordinary people, and creating a more active public by moving outside the definitions of professional news’. The underlying notion in this definition, as in the Video Volunteers initiative, is engaging communities by training them, and by seeking their views on issues of concern, rather than being ignored or covered by the lenses of traditional news sense. Community or citizen media in all its various forms is inseparably linked to the enhancement of civic participation. The International Association of Media and Communication Research states that community media ‘originates, circulates, and resonates from the sphere of civil society’ (in Rennie, 2006: 4). Rennie (2006) says that when a media form is created by a community, there is an implied component of civic engagement in its production. The democratic and participatory nature of community media allows a pathway for the exploration of civic duty that is all but lost in so many sectors of social life. Rennie (2006: 35) points out that ‘civil society requires communication platforms’. Community or citizen media, then, can be viewed as a tool readily available for the expression of a collective civic voice.

However, questions remain about how these initiatives in participatory communication for social change can be extended to cover 300 million people in India? Can these participatory approaches – including experiments in citizen/community journalism such as Video Volunteers and community radio – play the kind of role Schramm (1964) and Rogers (1976) envisaged for the media? Can the level of poverty and illiteracy be reduced on a measurable scale by media participation? Can citizen journalism substitute for the social accountability of mainstream media journalism, while at the same time remaining accessible to ordinary citizens and effecting change in a democracy? These are significant issues that need to be explored further, to take account of the crisis of the advertising-funded media business model now apparent in both advanced and developing economies. Could alternative and citizen journalism initiatives such as Video Volunteers, dependent on philanthropy of a few local and overseas donors, provide a lasting model for participatory communication for social change, economic growth and democracy? Or does the Indian government needs to prioritise the building of citizen/community media infrastructure in the country by providing a helping hand, without strings attached, in the form of subsidies to proactive communities and non-government organisations to create this ‘third’ but essential tier of citizen media (Sen, 2009), in order to truly make it ‘participatory communication for social change’?

Note

1 Panchayat raj (local self-government) is a local or village-based justice system, where elected local leaders hear local disputes and offer remedies to sparring persons in a village. In 1992, the Indian government revitalised the punchayat raj, which has resulted in a degree of grassroots political participation.

References


Dahlgren, Peter and Sparks, Colin (eds) (1991), Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere, Taylor and Francis, London.


Roy, Aniruddha 2008, ‘Citizen Journalism is Waiting to Break the Cocoon’, Merinews.com, 1 April.

**Websites**

**Usha M. Rodrigues** is an Adjunct Research Associate in the School of Communication and Media Studies, Monash University. Her research interests are in the broad areas of international journalism and multimedia platform journalism. She has worked for more than 20 years as a journalist and journalism educator in Australia, India and the United States, and is co-editor of *Youth, Media and Culture in the Asia Pacific Region* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008) and co-author of *Indian Media in a Globalised World* (Sage, 2010).