Environmental journalism in Oceania: Investigative icons from nuclear refugees to climate change migrants

A/Professor David Robie
School of Communication Studies, Auckland, Aotearoa/NZ, 4 December 2010

Where are we?

September, 2000 …

IPI Global Journalist

Where is this?

Photo: Pip Star

Carteret Islands – icon of relocation

First climate refugees start move to new island home

The Age, 29 July 2009

Carteret Islands – icon of relocation

Daily Telegraph, 10 January 2010

© Pacific Media Centre
Iconic environmental images and the media – MIJT Conference 2010

Daily Mail, 18 December 2007

The story of our millennium

Location, near Bougainville

Flight across the ocean

Locating the relocation

Papua New Guinea

Location, near Tinputz on Bougainville

Carteret Islands

Citation between Rabaul and Tinputz

Citation between Rabaul

Daily Telegraph, 10 January 2010

Oxfam video

Ursula’s story

"Climate change is not just about statistics. Climate change is not just about science. Climate change is about human rights.

"Where are human rights when it comes to people being displaced from their communities to another location not of their choice?

“We have to move because we are being forced to leave.”

Quote: Ursula Rakova – Sisters of the Planet brochure (Oxfam)

© Pacific Media Centre 2011
Iconic environmental images and the media – MIJT Conference 2010

Tahitian struggle for justice

Moruroa atmospheric tests ended in 1996 – health campaign

Moruroa, 1960s

Tahitian struggle for justice

Back to the future for Banabans

Banabans relocated to Rabi in 1945 – 90% of island stripped by phosphate mining between 1900 & 1979

Seeking $2m from Aust, NZ, UK, Japan

Some of the original 703 settlers on Rabi in 1945

75 million Asia-Pacific refugees?

NZ can contribute far more

Changing demographics

Climate Change and Migration in the South Pacific Region: Policy Perspectives

Thursday 19 and Friday 20 July 2007

St Andrew’s College, Auckland

NZ can contribute far more

© Pacific Media Centre
Iconic environmental images and the media – MIJT Conference 2010

War refugees ... and now climate

Not the future ... it's reality NOW!

Impacts in the Pacific
- Potential to affect almost every issue linked to poverty and development – few people untouched
- Severe threats to human security & economies
- Preventing catastrophic climate change in Pacific means keeping warming below 2°C as possible
- Wealthy, polluting countries – eg. Australia, NZ – must reduce emissions:
  - By at least 40% by 2020
  - By at least 95% by 2050
- Support for Pacific low carbon "adaptation" plans – renewable energy sources

Challenge of digital technologies

Wealthy, polluting countries – eg. Australia, NZ – must reduce emissions:
- By at least 40% by 2020
- By at least 95% by 2050
- Support for Pacific low carbon "adaptation" plans – renewable energy sources
Strategies for the news media

- The power of journalism to mobilise societies towards action has been recognised for centuries.
  - Napoleon Bonaparte once said:
    - A journalist is a grumbler, a censurer, a giver of advice, a regent of sovereigns, a tutor of nations. Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.

Journalism and democracy

- Conventional view of journalism – watchdog on power, bring facts to light, uncover abuses, "afflict the comfortable, comfort the afflicted"
  - Okay – but not enough to make “successful democracy”... Society needs more from media
  - Citizens must also deliberate about policy. In other words, an informed citizen is not necessarily an empowered and active citizen.

A circular model of tension

- Global Journalism: Topical Issues and Media Systems, de Beer & Merrill, 2004 (p. 4)

Deliberative journalism – ‘a beacon’

- News media play substantive role in public deliberation – have done so for centuries.
  - Exemplified by role played by news media in independence movements and nation-building
  - Gandhi: ‘I believe that a struggle which chiefly relies on internal strength cannot be wholly carried out without a newspaper.’

1. Public journalism – US-style

- Public journalism is a ‘philosophy, set of practices and a movement’ to cultivate deliberative democracy
- Also called ‘civic journalism’ or ‘communitarian journalism’
- ‘Technology of community rather than technology of tutelage’
- Throw off notion of ‘guardians’
- Generate ‘public knowledge’ and challenge or subvert mainstream media

Cole Campbell’s five-point PK tabs

- 1. Myths and meanings – citizens’ capacity to act
- 2. Surveillance and assessment – how citizens and communities develop own “SWOT” analysis
- 3. Public discourse – how communities talk about opportunities/challenges
- 4. Public judgment – working through “consciousness raising”
- 5. Public work – translating their judgments into action
2. Citizen journalism

- Addresses concerns about media ownership, public participation & reform of media traditions
- Participatory journalism – involves citizens using internet to play role in collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news & information
- "Independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant info needed for democracy"

3. Community/alternative media

- Citizen media existed long before Internet. Examples: Green-Left, Rolling Stone and Slate - Indigenous minority media
- Key characteristics:
  - Small-scale, serve distinct 'disadvantaged' groups – respect diversity
  - Independent of state, market
  - Horizontal/non-hierarchical, structures, support democracy
  - Offer non-dominant, counter-hegemonic discourses
- "Weapons of the weak"

4. Development Journalism

- Five different interpretations – depending on varying assumptions in countries
  - Interactive, advocative and educational – community self-reliance
  - Deliberative development journalism puts communication "at service of development" for people it seeks to serve
    - Examples: Inter Press Service (IPS), OneWorld.net, DEPTH News, TVE/Gemini News (defunct)
  - "Giving voice to the voiceless" (Dixit, 1994) – outside centres of business, political and mainstream political power
- More emphasis in news on "process" analysis rather than "event"
- Examine causes – seek and solutions

Examples: Blogs

- YouTube
- Facebook
- Twitter
- 'Explosive growth' in users of social networking and citizen video sharing platforms
- Important means of distributing news
- Activism – www.indymedia.org
- OhmyNews (OMN)
- Digg + Newswire

Native community media

- Indigenous communities in Australia:
  - Examples: Koori Mail, Koori Radio 93.7FM, Indigenous Voices
  - Māori, Pasifika broadcasters in NZ:
  - Examples: Māori Television, Pacific Media Network (Niufó), Tagata Pasifika (TVNZ)
  - Bailey et al: "Societal groups that are represented one-sidedly, disadvantaged, stigmatised, or even repressed can benefit ... from alternative media ..."
5. Peace journalism

- Mass media alone not “prime instigators of peace or violence” in their communities
- But powerful force in determining how publics identify and deal with disagreements and tension
- Journalists’ “objectivity” conventions serve to marginalise voices calling for peace, restraint and dialogue
- Not radical change – but subtle shifts in ‘seeing, thinking’ the news

Dixit’s simple eco journalism code

- 1. Discard the myth that reporting on development (environment) must always be positive.
- 2. Find a fresh news angle
- 3. Lively, eyewitness reporting – talk to the grassroots.
- 4. Don’t exaggerate. Don’t cry wolf.
- 5. Zoom out so we get the larger picture.

Finally, challenge corporate media

- 1. Stick to the environmental facts.
- 2. Be scrupulously fair.
- 4. Maintain personal honesty.
- 5. Report with vision,
- 6. Uphold your independence.
- 7. Listen to your conscience.
- 8. Empower citizens through all means at your disposal – digital media, social media, cartoons, videos, blogs for “journalism of outrage”

Independent journalism

- Pacific Scoop, launched in 2009

Independent media – new ‘hub’

- Independent Scoop, launching this weekend

© Pacific Media Centre
Bula vinaka

developing countries aren't thinking about how climate change will affect them. They already know.

PMC available on YouTube: www.youtube.com/pacmedcentre