Investigating at the grassroots: exploring the origins, purposes journalistic practices and outcomes in two award-winning *Daily Dispatch* editorial projects.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the origins, purposes, journalistic practices and outcomes of two award winning projects namely *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* done by *Daily Dispatch's* Gcina Ntsaluba in 2009. The projects were described by the paper as investigative journalism but interestingly the original idea came from grassroots driven strategies and they were done by adopting alternative news gathering strategies and immersion in the ordinary people, inspired by public journalism.

This thesis follows Christians et al's (2009) normative theoretical framework of press roles summarised as the monitorial, facilitative, collaborative and radical roles. It provides normative prescriptions of public and investigative journalism, development and radical journalism. It then draws on sociological theoretical critiques in order to provide an analytical overview of the complex matrix of political, economic and media contexts which influenced the origins, purposes, journalistic practices and outcomes of the two projects. Drawing on a critical realist case study design, the thesis goes on to provide a narrative account of the *two projects* based on the in-depth interviews exploring the editorial staff's ideas on the origins, purposes, journalistic practices and outcomes of the projects and a qualitative content/thematic analysis of the journalistic texts related to the projects. This primary data is then critically evaluated against normative theories of press performance, especially Nip's (2008) key practices and Haas's (2007) 'public philosophy' of public journalism. It is also evaluated against a normative framework of what constitutes "good investigative journalism" based on Ettema and Glasser (1998), Waisbord (2000) among others. Protess et al 1991's classic mobilisation model is used to interrogate the projects' outcomes.

The thesis established that there was a close connection of the monitorial (investigative journalism), facilitative (public journalism) and radical (tabloid journalism) roles at the paper which shows that the roles are not mutually exclusive. The two projects however fell short of the collaborative role (development journalism) which can, partly, be attributed to the adversarial nature of the relationship between the state and the media. The *Daily Dispatch* also failed to activate a platform for deliberation and public problem solving. There might thus be more scope in adopting a 'facilitative monitorial role' which would not only expose those who violate other people's human rights, corrupt people and institutions that are not performing well. Instead it will also activate civic life and facilitate 'collaboration' between government and the publics in problem solving.

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Dedication

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Introduction

Origins of and contexts for the research

This thesis is an exploration of the origins, journalistic purposes, practices and outcomes of two award-winning *Daily Dispatch* editorial projects namely *Broken Homes: how the Eastern Cape housing plan failed the poor* and *Slumlords* done in 2009. The *Daily Dispatch* is a small daily commercial newspaper based in East London, but serving the eastern half of the Eastern Cape Province, one of the most economically depressed parts of South Africa. It is owned by *Avusa* and its circulation figures are 31 000 (Sharp interview 23/02/2011)[1]. Despite its small size, limited resources, and the economic pressures on it, the paper has in recent years consistently invested in investigative projects, some of which have won national awards. In so doing, the paper has competed with much bigger newspapers like the *Mail and Guardian* and *Sunday Times* through its innovative, in-depth and empathy-evoking investigations.

The *Daily Dispatch*'s popularity in the Eastern Cape and strong historical commitment to investigative journalism can, in part, be traced back to the times of Donald Woods who became editor from 1965 to 1977. Woods was a friend of Steve Biko, the leader of the Black Consciousness Movement and during this time, the paper pursued a strictly anti-apartheid stance. Woods recruited staff from overseas as well as from various parts of South Africa and during his editorship, the newspaper's circulation figures grew from 18 000 to 33 000 by 1977, becoming one of the most profitable in the country, after the *Sunday Times* and *The Star* (Williams 2010). Woods provided support to Biko through his editorials and went into exile after Biko's death (Williams 2010). Under the editorship of both Phylicia Oppelt (2005-2008) and Andrew Trench (2008-2010), the *Daily Dispatch* won numerous national awards for a series of exposés. In parallel with this attempt to resuscitate the newspaper's legacy of investigative journalism, in 2009, Trench adopted the *Community Dialogues* in East London under the banner of public journalism, a global journalistic reform movement begun in the United States in the late 1980s (Trench interview 26/08/2010).

This research was undertaken in a time of great turmoil in journalism. For example, online media and "the people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen 2006; Gillmor 2004) are driving tectonic changes in the global media industry. The recession worldwide has also contributed to widespread closures of newspapers and other media organisations, especially in Western democracies. The Pew Centre for Excellence in Journalism (2010) reports that the American newspapers industry has lost 30% of its reportorial capacity since 2000. South African

[1] Figures acquired from the *Daily Dispatch* subscription manager Ella Sharp on 23/02/2011

newspapers have suffered in the same way with a number of editorial stuff cuts being witnessed (The New Age 2009).

This research focuses on two award-winning projects done by the paper in 2009. The *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* projects were produced by the same journalist, Gcina Ntsaluba over two three-month periods. Ntsaluba received the Mondi Shanduka 'Story of the Year' award together with the Vodacom Journalist of the Year award for *Broken Homes.* His second project, *Slumlords,* won the CNN Africa Digital Journalism award and the Vodacom Online Journalism award (Trench interview 26/08/2010). The awards reinforced the *Daily Dispatch*'s strong reputation for investigative journalism, but the success of these projects was also connected to the development of public journalism at the newspaper. This is because, in both cases, the original story idea came from grassroots news gathering strategies inspired by public journalism. The *Broken Homes* project came into being after small journalistic teams discovered broken and abandoned RDP houses on their travels to different parts of the Eastern Cape as part of a project called the *Dispatch Adventures* (Trench interview 26/08/2010). The idea for the *Slumlords* project came from a public journalism-inspired town hall meeting called the *Community Dialogue* in Southernwood, an inner city area of East London (Trench interview 26/08/2010). The *Broken Homes* project drew into the spotlight 20 000 unfinished and/or 'broken' RDP houses across the province abandoned by 'emerging contractors' and exposed widespread dysfunction in the Eastern Cape housing department and the suffering of shack dwellers (Ntsaluba 2009a-m). In the *Slumlords* project, Ntsaluba went undercover and discovered that tenants, many of them students, were being overcharged to live in overcrowded, unhygienic conditions, often in shacks, in Southernwood and King William's Town (Ntsaluba 2009n-bbb).

The place of investigative journalism in the South African context is particularly relevant at the moment as the government has critiqued the South African commercial media for their alleged lack of accountability and for their 'adversarial' and 'hyper-critical' stance (Duncan 2010: 4). The media, including the *Daily Dispatch*, have meanwhile raised strong objections to the proposed Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) and other perceived attacks on their performance and on their independence (Duncan 2010: 5). Both the media and the government claim to have the right to represent the public interest (Wasserman and De Beer 2005: 36). This thesis is thus concerned with interrogating the role that the *Daily Dispatch* understands itself playing in South African democracy in a context where it is in an ostensibly adversarial relationship with the state, and where it is facing serious economic pressures.

A normative press theory framework, which explores the philosophical underpinnings and the political realities that inform a "normative" approach to the question of the role of journalism in a

democratic society, will inform this research (Christians et al. 2009: 125). Christians et al. summarise the roles of the media as the monitorial role of a vigilant informer; the facilitative role that seeks to support and strengthen civil society; the radical role that challenges authority and voices support for reform; and the collaborative role that creates partnerships between journalists and centres of power in society, notably the state, to advance mutually acceptable interests (2009: 125-126). Investigative journalism falls comfortably within the monitorial role, while public journalism falls within the facilitative role. Radical alternative journalism falls under the radical role while development journalism can be understood to intersect with the collaborative role (Christians et al. 2009: 201). Christians et al. suggest that there are certain oppositions and potential conflicts of role, but the demarcations between the different roles are not always so easy to define (2009: 32). This thesis explores the origins, purposes, practices and outcomes of the *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* projects, from the vantage point of both these normative theories of the press and the perspectives of the *Daily Dispatch* editorial staff involved in designing and executing them.

The first normative framework to be explored is the monitorial role, especially one of its 'associated' journalisms, investigative journalism. Ettema and Glasser argue that while all journalism is investigative, "investigative reporting is distinctive because it is rigorous, committed and proactive and uses time consuming methods and potentially achieves high impact results" (1998: 3). In addition, investigative stories "issue a compelling call for public moral indignation" because they tell stories of "victims, villains and institutions in disarray" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 4). But investigative journalists cannot on their own repair systemic breakdown or institutional disorder because "they are not in charge of the legislative and legal machinery necessary to complete the task of civic reform" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 4).

One of the key analytical frameworks in investigative journalism theory is the 'mobilisation model', in which journalists use their contacts and innovative research methods to bring wrongdoing to public attention (Step one). Their journalism alters public opinion and informed citizenry demands reforms from their elected representatives (Step two). Policy makers then take corrective action (Step 3) (Protess et al. 1991: 15). However, Protess et al attempted to revise the mobilisation model of investigative journalism, arguing that if, as suggested by the mobilisation model, the public is a necessary link between the media and policy changes, then that link is weak and unreliable as policy changes often occur regardless of the public's reaction (1991: 19). They argue that while investigative journalists and officials would appear to be natural adversaries their relationships may, at times, be more complex, less adversarial and more 'collaborative' than is

usually understood. This suggests that there is potentially a closer relationship between the 'collaborative' and 'monitorial' roles than is usually understood or acknowledged.

Meanwhile, public journalism refers to a form of journalism that is predicated on critiques of mainstream journalism's limited journalistic mission of "telling the news" to "a broader mission of helping public life to go well" (Merritt 1995: 113-114). For Haas, public journalists "have a responsibility to help bring into being a deliberating public by creating and sustaining an open-ended, unbounded public sphere to which all citizens have access and in which all topics of concern to citizens and all opinions available can be articulated, deliberated, and critiqued" (2007: 47). To facilitate this public sphere, journalists should share their authority with citizens in the setting of the news agenda by, for example, meeting with groups of citizens on a regular basis (in town hall meeting and focus groups) to discuss which topics they would like to see covered as part of daily news reporting (Haas 2007: 33). Public journalism means going beyond simply "facilitating" public deliberation to include public problem solving – it should help the public "act upon, rather than just learn about, its problems" (Rosen 1999b: 22). Haas, in his explication of a normative theory for public journalism, goes on to develop a "consensus conference model" whereby "news organisations could engage citizens and experts more interactively and equitably in the search for systemic solutions to problems while at the same time involve government officials in the process of actually implementing those solutions in practice" (2001: 15). With this focus on solutions to public problems, public journalism has much in common with the mobilisation model of investigative journalism.

Goals of the research and research processes

This thesis will critically examine what the *Daily Dispatch* editorial leaders involved in the two investigations *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* understand about the paper's role in South African democracy particularly with reference to the two investigations. They will also be asked to reflect critically upon their own understandings of the origins, purposes, journalistic practices and outcomes of the two investigative/public journalism projects:

- What was the motivation/impetus for a small, under-resourced newspaper to invest in these projects? For example did they come from a strong commitment to civic engagement or was it primarily a strategy to grow its circulation and readership figures in the face of stiff competition, or was it a combination of these and other factors?
- What kind of journalism did the *Daily Dispatch* editors and journalists involved in planning and executing these projects think they were doing through them?
- Where do the two projects fit in Christians et al (2009)'s normative press theory framework and how do they match up with normative descriptions of investigative

journalism, public journalism and development journalism? How did the press roles, and the different forms of journalism associated with each, relate to each other through these projects?

- What do the *Daily Dispatch* journalists involved in planning and executing these projects think could have been done differently to produce investigations that promoted a better public response and a more effective resolution of public problems?

In asking these questions it is hoped that the thesis will throw critical light on normative theories of the media's role in a democracy, including theories of investigative journalism (see Protess et al. 1991; Ettema and Glasser 1998), public journalism (see Haas 2007 and Nip 2006) and development journalism (see Shah 1996), and the relationships between these journalisms in the South African context.

Methods, procedures and techniques

This research was carried out within a broadly critical realist epistemological framework and qualitative research methodology. Critical realism informed this research by providing a framework for understanding the institutional context within which the *Daily Dispatch* does investigative and public journalism. This research is a case study analysis and follows Simons, who argues that it is an approach that can be constituted of different techniques, including document analysis and in-depth interviews which this research will make use of (2009: 1). The researcher read all the 57 articles published in association with both projects and evaluated them against normative prescriptions for a range of journalisms, including investigative journalism, public journalism and development journalism. Some of the articles were long and others quite short. In doing the analysis, qualitative content/thematic analysis was employed, which is a "move away from content analysis of an enumerative kind to one that is more qualitative, which focuses on the symbolic, discursive, framing or narrative dimensions of media texts" (Devereux 2007: 194). This analysis provided a helpful precursor to interviewing key research subjects as it helped in the formulation of some of the questions asked of the key research subjects. In-depth interviews were undertaken with the former editor, news editor, online editor and journalist responsible for the two investigations, to allow the editorial staff of the *Daily Dispatch* to reveal their perspectives on the origins, purposes, practices and outcomes of the projects. This researcher's preferred way of working was to see the *Daily Dispatch* journalists as research 'participants' who are "engaged in the study in a shared experience that they can value, if not partly own" (Simons 2009: 36).

The presentation of the thesis

Chapter 1 provides Christians et al.'s (2009) normative framework of media roles as well as detailed normative descriptions of investigative journalism, public journalism and development journalism. It also touches on tabloid and alternative journalism since these 'journalisms' resonate with some of the key practices used in the *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* investigations. **Chapter 2** discusses how critical political economy theories within Media Studies have levelled critiques against normative descriptions of investigative journalism, public journalism and development journalism. It also provides an overview of the current South African political, economic and media contexts within which the *Dispatch* projects were executed. The South African housing context is also provided. **Chapter 3** focuses on the epistemological and methodological frameworks that informed this study namely critical realism and qualitative research respectively. It also sheds light on the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research. The research data is presented in three separate chapters. **Chapter 4** focuses on the origins and impetus to the *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* projects. **Chapter 5** analyses the *Broken Homes* project against the normative prescriptions of investigative, public, development, radical and tabloid journalism encountered in Chapter one and also in the light of the political, economic and media contexts discussed in Chapter two. **Chapter 6** goes through a similar process in analysing the *Slumlords* project. **Chapter 7** concludes the thesis by reflecting on the key issues that emerged from the two projects and provides an overview of how they could have been done differently.

Chapter 1

Normative theories of the media

1. Introduction

This chapter explains what normative theory is and then goes on to provide an exposition of the four-part typology of press roles summarised by Christians et al. (2009: 125-126). The four roles are the monitorial role of a vigilant informer; the facilitative role that seeks to support and strengthen civil society; the radical role that challenges authority and voices support for reform; and the collaborative role that creates partnerships between journalists and centres of power in society, notably the state in order to advance mutual interests (2009: 125-126). I then go on to describe some of the 'journalisms' that most closely match each of these roles, particularly investigative journalism (which is associated with the monitorial role), public journalism (associated with the facilitative role), alternative journalism (radical role), and development journalism (collaborative role). I also touch on tabloid journalism in the South African context (see Wasserman 2010) because it resonates with some of the key practices of public journalism and alternative journalism in some interesting and unexpected ways. Based on what investigative journalism theorists have said about what makes up good investigative journalism, I present a normative theory of what might constitute 'good investigative journalism practice', which I use as a reference point in my analysis of the two investigations in Chapters five and six. Lastly, I show that while there is a potential of conflict between some of the four roles, there are interesting overlaps between different roles and some forms of journalisms exhibit characteristics of more than one role. The next section explains what normative theory is and will also elaborate on the four roles.

1.1. What is normative theory?

Christians et al argue that there are two types of theories of the press: first, those that prescribe the normative tasks for the media and those that describe the factual role of the media in society (2009: viii). The latter approaches the issue from the 'objective' angle of 'media sociology,' while the former deals with the 'subjective,' culturally-related values held by various actors about the mission of the media (ibid). Normative press theory is thus concerned with questions about what journalism *ought to do* in an ideal world. By contrast, sociological theories about what the role of journalism in society *actually is* provide a more critical approach to understanding the role of journalism in society, as will be seen in Chapter two (my emphasis).

Christians et al. argue that normative theories are "justified not as affirmative instruments to strengthen the prevailing status quo but as instruments of emancipation from the status quo and support media autonomy and self regulation" (Christians et al. 2009: ix). In the next section I present an outline of the monitorial role.

1.2 The monitorial role

Christians et al. perceive the monitorial role in a positive light in that it results in public enlightenment and is essential for maintaining the independent accountability of government to the public and securing the health of the public sphere (2009: 144). The most basic meaning of the term monitorial refers to an organised scanning of the real world of people, conditions and events together with potentially relevant sources of information (Christians et al. 2009: 139). The monitorial role, according to Gleason, overlaps with the familiar press role of watchdog or guardian of the public interest since one of the criteria for selective monitoring is the wish to protect the public. This opens the way of a potentially critical or even adversarial stance thereby suggesting an overlap with the radical role that challenges authority in the public interest (1994: 139). Christians et al. place the vigilance and control elements of monitoring in a positive light, since the good forms of surveillance are justified by the motive of public enlightenment, particularly true when the media monitor on behalf of an uninformed public or of a victimised group and against misuse of power or the negligence of elected authorities (2009: 142). Investigative journalism fits well under this role (Christians et al. 2009: 144).

1.3 The facilitative role

The facilitative role is concerned with the promotion of an inclusive, plural and active citizenship, improving the quality of public life and contributing to deliberative forms of democracy (Christians et al. 2009: 126). Under this role, the media promotes dialogue amongst their readers and viewers through communication that engages them and in which they actively participate (Christians et al. 2009: 158). Public journalism falls comfortably under this role since it comes from the need for a more robust public and increased citizen involvement (Christians et al. 2009: 126). The media according to the facilitative role also recognise that society is multidimensional and "support and strengthen participation in civil society outside the state and the market and they do not merely report on civil society's associations and activities but seek to enrich and improve them" (ibid). This links the facilitative role to social responsibility theory (see Siebert et al 1956) and to notions in democratic societies of the press as a fourth estate that supports debate and people's decision making (Christians et al. 2009: 159). Under the facilitative role citizens are taken seriously in clarifying and resolving public problems in order to promote democratic

pluralism (Christians et al. 2009: 159). Public journalism, a two-decades-old reform movement falls comfortably under this role.

1.4 The collaborative role

Collaboration refers to the "relationship between the media and sources of political and economic power, primarily the state and its agencies" (Christians et al. 2009: 31). While the partnership between the state and the media is built on mutual trust and a shared commitment to mutually agreeable means and moral ends in the promotion of the public interest, Christians et al argue that in practise this partnership often falls short of this ideal (2009: 198). According to Christians et al. "the claim to media co-operation can be more general and involves that journalism support the national interest or be patriotic and respect authority" (2009: 31). A typical situation where this role is appropriate is a 'new' nation, like South Africa "with its intense pressure towards economic and social development under conditions of scarce resources and immature political institutions" (Christians et al. 2009: 127). The collaborative role between the state and the media is often advocated, if not mandated, under unusual conditions such as terrorism, war and natural disasters. Conditions of crisis and emergency which pose a threat to society – in the South African context, examples are crime and HIV/AIDS – can steer the state and the media towards each other (Christians et al. 2009: 127). Christians et al argue that "while collaboration of the kind described almost inevitably impinges on the independence of the press and other media it can usually be legitimated on grounds of immediate necessity" (2009: 127).

Christians et al. argue that apart from the literature on development journalism which deals with some of these tensions "the collaborative role is hardly represented at all in the literature on press roles, because it contradicts the hegemonic libertarian and professional journalistic ideology of an independent press" (2009: 200). According to Christians et al.:

> Collaboration through acceptance is the only type that deals specifically and exclusively with merits of a collaborative role for journalism and journalists only enter into "*fully normative* agreements to collaborate after taking into account *all that needs to be known* about the *particular arrangements*" Journalists also consider the *outcomes of collaboration*, including an assessment of the consequences of the co-operation for the larger community and judge the collaborative role to be correct and proper. The articulation and acceptance of a viable normative collaborative role for the press requires a more nuanced view of the state and state-press arrangements. So long as journalists insist on casting the state in the role of the villain, collaboration with the state will remain dishonourable and indefensible endeavour (2009: 217 emphasis in the original).

The term 'development journalism' has become associated with certain media practices and arrangements deemed appropriate for 'developing' nations of the South. Collaboration in the tradition of development journalism usually involves a partnership with the state, though not

always a formal one, premised on a commitment by the press to play a positive role in the processes of development (Christians et al. 2009: 200).

1.5 The radical role

The radical role according to Christians et al. is at some distance from being facilitative and is a clear departure from collaboration with authority (2009: 31). According to Christians et al the term radical has two main definitions. On the one side is the traditional notion of radical media as instruments of significant revolutionary movements directed at the power structure at large. On the other hand are those later forms of radical media defined by John Downing as "media, generally small scale and in many different forms, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives" (2001: v). The media enact the radical role when they "provide a platform for views and voices that are critical of authority and the established order and also give support for drastic change and reform" (Christians et al. 2009: 3).

According to Christians et al. without the radical role democracy would not be possible because of the radical role's attempt to expose the conflict of interest between those who dominate the political economic conditions and those who have little influence over these conditions" (2009: 179-180). They argue that "the radical role rests on the view that the political economic structure in society tends to produce the hegemony of the privileged few" (Christians et al. 2009: 180). Emancipation from this domination is triggered by activists and minority groups. Accordingly the radical media support such groups so that they can also participate in democratic governance" (ibid). According to Christians et al. in liberal democratic society, the radical role tends to be fulfilled by a minority sector of the printed press that represents some social or political movements and advocates radical opinions and policies along partisan lines" (2009: 126).

Having outlined the four press theories by Christians et al. (2009), the next section presents normative theories of 'journalisms' associated with each: investigative journalism (monitorial role); public journalism (facilitative role); development journalism (collaborative role); radical alternative journalism (radical role).

1.6 Investigative Journalism (under the monitorial role)

This section provides a detailed normative theory of investigative journalism. Based on Protess et al (1991), Ettema and Glasser (1989 and 1998), De Burgh (2000), Waisbord (2000) and other investigative journalism theorists, an explanation of how investigative journalism is conceptualised in theory and is practised in different contexts is provided. Lastly a distillation of

the key ideas and practices that exemplify 'good investigative journalism' is provided based on what scholars and practitioners have said about this kind of journalism.

1.6.1 What is investigative journalism?

The work of the investigative journalist is seen by de Burgh as distinct from similar work done by lawyers, police, auditors and regulatory bodies in that "it is not limited as to target, is not legally founded and is closely connected to publicity" (2000: 9). As seen earlier, investigative journalism falls comfortably under the monitorial role where journalists target those in positions of power, especially government officials. The relationship between the media and the government cannot be seen as entirely adversarial or friendly as they are in a "symbiotic relationship" " (Larsson 2002: 27). Their relationship is "multi-dimensional, always changing and exists on several levels" influenced by political, social and economic contexts (ibid).

Investigative journalism has been variously defined in different places and contexts (Waisbord 2000: xix). It has been shaped by the shifts in the understandings of what the role of the media should be during particular times (Christians et al 2009: vii). It has also largely been shaped by the history and growth of journalism in the different contexts and their relationships with governments and other economic, political and social power holders (2000: xix). There are conflicting perspectives both inside and outside the media regarding what actually constitutes this type of journalism, both with regards to how it is carried out in daily news work and its implications for democracy (de Burgh 2000: 7). Waisbord points out how the meaning of investigative journalism varies according to dissimilar press traditions and conditions of journalistic practice (2000: xix). It has thus acquired different names; 'the "journalism of outrage", "muckraking" (Protess et al 1991: 6), "adversarial journalism", "advocacy reporting", "public service journalism", and "exposé reporting" (Feldstein 2006: 106).

Some theorists have attempted to define investigative journalism by reference to the distinctive methods that investigative reporters use to get information (see Anderson 1976, Aucoin 1995, Benjaminson 1990, Gaines 1994). Others are sceptical about using information-gathering methods as a means to distinguish investigative journalism from other forms of journalism (Waisbord 2000: v). Protess et al.'s (1991) definition of investigative journalism prioritises the story telling process and the outcomes of the investigation over the methods used. Protess et al argue that investigative journalism is the journalism of outrage which refers to a form of story-telling that "probes the boundaries of America's civic conscience" (1991: 14). They point out that investigative journalists intend to "provoke outrage in their reports of malfeasance and that the work of the journalist becomes validated when citizens respond by demanding change from their

leaders leading to civic betterment" (ibid). The watchdog role overrides in importance all the other roles of the media and dictates the form in which the media should be organised (Curran and Gurevitch 1991: 84). According to Schultz, investigative journalists are driven by the dictum that "the role of the press is to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted" (1998: 2). This means "watching over the powerful few in society on behalf of the many to guard against tyranny" (Berry 2009: 3). Kovach and Rosenstiel argue that "all of journalism was changed with *Watergate,* especially Washington journalism. Executive director of the *New York Times* was so disturbed by the way *The Washington Post* dominated the story that he reorganised his newspaper's Washington bureau to create a team of investigative reporters (2001: 1). CBS news also launched *60 minutes*, which often does investigative stories and which became the most successful news program network television ever produced (Feldstein 2006: 109). Activist Elinor Sisulu, who has worked to document the post–independence *Gukurahundi* massacre in Zimbabwe and current government abuses of power there, has said of Africa: "Ours is a continent of silences: perhaps the job of the investigative journalist is to identify those silences and make them speak" (Ansell 2009: 7). Gayala from the Democratic Republic Of Congo (DRC) talks about "the role of journalists in uncovering social, economic, or cultural developments too recent to have been identified by experts, hidden by received wisdom and masked by media sensationalism" (cited in Ansell 2009: 4). He says that "the relationships between farmers and the urban community; the true lives of workers in our country; the reappearance of the kind of poverty that social benefits were supposed to cure also need investigation" including South Africa (ibid). Curran and Gurevitch argue that the simplistic definition of the watchdog as applying only to the individual and the state is worn out and it is critical to pay attention to the exercise of power in the private sphere most notably in the home and the economy (1991: 86). The next section elaborates on the mobilisation model of investigative journalism and critiques thereof.

1.6.2 The mobilisation model of investigative journalism

According to Protess et al, in the mobilisation model the conventional wisdom of investigative journalism holds that the general public, once mobilised, becomes a catalyst for change (1991: 15). Protess et al. summarise the mobilisation model in the following three-step process:

> Step1. Vigilant journalists bring wrongdoing to public attention (through published media investigations).
> Step 2. Their journalism leads to changes in public opinion and an informed citizenry responds by demanding reforms from their elected representatives.
> Step 3. Policy makers take corrective action (policy reforms). (Protess et al. 1991: 15)

For journalists, the mobilisation model appeals to both the professional values of organisational sovereignty and social responsibility. In this paradigm, journalists remain independent of the governing process while still influencing it for the public good (Protess et al. 1991: 15). This

model, according to Protess et al., allows journalists to have their cake and eat it too as exemplified when their work leads to the betterment of civic life (ibid). According to Protess et al.:

> By exposing villainy and victimisation, the investigative reporter attempts to achieve one of the noblest aims of contemporary journalism: activating the conscience of citizens to promote the public interest. The journalism of outrage is, thereby, a vehicle for fulfilling the social obligations of modern media. In the mobilisation model of investigative journalism the conventional wisdom holds that the general public, once mobilised becomes a catalyst for change. Media exposés lead to public policy reforms by first changing public opinion. (1991: 18)

The model exemplifies the ideal of an informed citizenry which exerts its will on an accountable government (Protess et al. 1991: 18). The mobilisation model is closely connected to Ettema and Glasser's explanation of investigative journalism as being concerned with "achieving potentially high impact results through the issuing of a compelling call for public moral indignation when they tell stories of victims, villains and institutions in disarray" (1998: 4). Ettema and Glasser argue that investigative stories:

> Call attention to the breakdown of social systems and the disorder within public institutions that cause injury and injustice. In turn their stories implicitly demand the response of public officials and the public itself to that breakdown and disorder. Thus the work of these reporters calls us as society to decide what is and what is not, an outrage to our sense of moral order and to consider our expectations for our officials, our institutions and ultimately ourselves. In this way investigative journalists are custodians of public conscience. (1998: 3)

To think of journalists this way, however is not to assume that they can, all on their own, repair systemic breakdown or clean up institutional order as they are not the keepers of the legislative and legal machinery necessary to complete the task of civic reform (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 4). They add that "neither is it to suppose that journalists are moral arbiters who can decide all on their own how everyone else ought to behave" (ibid). This is because journalists are not the guardians of some superior moral knowledge. Rather they hold the means to report and disseminate stories that can engage the public's sense of right and wrong and so they become the custodians of what we exactly imagine conscience to be: a morally engaged voice, thereby (paradoxically) contradicting the objective stance of monitorial journalism (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 4).

Investigative journalism reveals some form of victimisation with which readers or viewers can identify with. The victims in the exposés of investigative journalism are representative examples of larger patterns of wrongdoing and the purpose of such exposures is to hold those responsible to account (Protess et al. 1991: 7). According to Waisbord, investigative journalists dig out information about power abuses whose function is to make salient what is hidden, to bother, to

throw salt into wounds (2000: xviii). It is through producing "a weight of evidence" and "reasons that are good enough" that investigative journalists make their stories "sufficient and credible" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 13). As will be explained later, "the lack of accountability constitutes a major weakness of today's democracies and one of the most pressing issues to resolve" (Wasserman and De Beer 2005: 45). Wasserman and de Beer argue how in the South African context "this is encapsulated in the different perspectives of the 'public interest' versus the 'national interest' from which the media and government see the role of the media" (2005: 45). The next section is a critique and revision of the mobilisation model.

1.6.3 The critique and revision of the mobilisation model

In the revision of the mobilisation model by Protess et al., "if, as suggested by the mobilisation model, the public is a necessary link between the media and policy changes, then studies between the government and policy making show that link to be weak and unreliable" (1991: 18). In their analyses, Protess et al. found that policy making proposals may be triggered by pre-publication transactions between journalists and policy makers and that these transactions are more collaborative and less adversarial than the monitorial watchdog role is traditionally thought to be (1991: 18).

Responding to the mobilisation model, Waisbord argues that its main strength is that it "opens a new analytical dimension that is more concerned with the linkages among journalism, public opinion and policy making than discussions about techniques and strategies" (2000: xvii). However she sees a problem with the approach in that "even if we could adequately measure outrage (how much, whose, for how long) it is problematic to equate investigative reporting with public indignation" (2000: xvii). This according to Waisbord is because a story can incite controversy or have no repercussions, depending on previous stories or existing beliefs about the subject and reactions are contingent on a number of factors unrelated to a reporter's work, such as the mood of public opinion, the dynamics of policy making, and specific ingredients of denunciations (Waisbord 2000: xvii). Waisbord further argues that lack of public outcry may reflect political disenchantment and apathy. The repercussion of stories then cannot be used as an adequate barometer to determine whether reports are truly 'investigative'. Even when they fail to mobilise public action, stories may actually qualify as examples of investigative journalism if they disclose corruption and other forms of power abuses (Waisbord 2000: xviii). As will be seen in the analyses chapters, the reporter can in fact have some sort of impact on reactions in addition to just doing a good reporting job if he takes further steps that try to engage the public and the government (public journalism). Following Waisbord (2000), Ettema and Glasser (1989 and 1998), de Burgh (2000) and other investigative journalism theorists, this thesis is concerned not

just with what investigative journalism is but what qualifies as 'good' investigative journalism. The next section is concerned with interrogating the techniques and strategies of "good investigative journalism". Part of it being an understanding of the subjects that investigative journalists cover and who their main targets are.

1.6.4 Who do investigative journalists target?

This section is concerned with explaining the kind of subjects that investigative journalists cover and who the main targets of investigations are. As has been seen earlier, there is an emphasis on the investigative role bringing out wrong doing so that those behind the wrongs can be punished. Big newspapers like to target politicians and to expose corruption, human rights violations, and under-performing institutions among other subjects. Investigative journalism according to Kovach and Rosenstiel entails illustrating the bad against the good (2001: 2). They ask the question about "how the press can purport to monitor the powerful if it does not illustrate successes as well as failures because endless criticisms lose meaning and the public would have no basis for judging good from bad" (2001: 2).

Investigative journalists target private individuals who appear to be going against established moral standards in order to advocate for their punishment (see Protess et al 1991, de Burgh 2000 and Ettema and Glasser 1998). This role, in advocating for certain moral standards, is explained in-depth when showing how journalists frame their stories by establishing binary opposites of what they consider wrong and right. For investigative reporter Pam Zekman of Chicago WBBBM-TV, investigative journalism is socially concerned and its focus is on abstract social issues. She is concerned with the poor, lack of maintenance of public housing, crime among other issues (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 4-5). Jonathan Kaufman is another reporter who achieved professional prominence with stories about people whose rights were being violated. "I do the kind of reporting I do in part because I think newspapers should write for people who otherwise would have no voices. If we are not going to write about homeless people and poor people and people discriminated against, who will?" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 6). The next section covers the qualities and skills of investigative journalists.

1.6.5 The qualities of investigative journalists

MacDougall states that "the investigative reporter is more inquisitive, more sceptical, more resourceful and imaginative in knowing where to look for facts, more ingenious in circumventing obstacles, more indefatigable in the pursuit of facts and able to endure drudgery and discomfort" (cited in Protess et al 1991: 5). Gaines adds that investigative reporters must have knowledge of laws that restrict and those that can help the gathering of information (2008: 5).The first skill of

the investigative journalist is the ability to sense a story (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 23). Investigative journalists will find a story in a tip-off or some other titbit of information and then begin framing the problem (ibid). According to investigative reporter Bill Dedman's metaphor, "the tree of reportorial skills has two main branches: one branch is getting people to tell you things they wouldn't tell somebody else, and the other branch is getting the facts from the records" so probing people for information and record searching are very important to investigative journalists (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 37).

Investigative journalists have to hunger for the truth and know where to look for information. According to reporter Bill Marimow, "investigative reporters go beyond the information that is released in a news conference, leaked to someone, oozed or seeped to someone" (interview with Ettema and Glasser 1998: 10). In making this commitment, investigative reporters are simultaneously freed from the most debilitating constraints of daily journalism: "reliance upon official sources, formulaic balances among contending positions and the daily deadline" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 10). In contrast to daily journalism, investigative journalism calls to the verification of facts, speaking to as many people as possible in order to arrive at the 'truth' and researching as many documents as possible (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 22). Undercover investigation provides journalists with the opportunity to get inside information. According to Gaines "in recent years, the technique of going undercover has fallen into disrepute and has been abused over the years with some people going undercover to steal documents which raises questions about how ethical this practise is in investigative journalism? (2008: 6). The idea of investigating in the public interest provides reason for investigative journalists to continue with the practise. Other investigative journalists go undercover in order to catch people out or to "set up traps for targets to incriminate themselves" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 39).

1.6.6 Framing investigative journalism stories and the notion of objectivity

Ettema and Glasser argue that framing the problem is an important element of the investigative journalist (1998: 20). They argue that the investigations that win awards "are a matter of mastery and journalistic craft and the key to mastery is the framing of the problem in a way that renders its complexities and uncertainties understandable and manageable" (1998: 20). Ettema and Glasser say that journalists are always accomplishing moral work (when they show that transgressions are in fact transgressions) because the consensus of values upon which they rely is neither stable nor complete (1989: 2). In order to engage the public conscience (i.e. effect Step two of the mobilisation model), journalists use narratives of victimhood and villainy to reveal the

violation not to be just "technically wrong" but "terribly wrong", which involves the use of irony and finding coherence and meaning in the story (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 13). Through narrative, the investigative reporter shows his/her readers "what it would be like if it happened to them: terror, pain, humiliation and abandonment" which makes framing core to any investigative journalism story (Ettema and Glasser 1989: 15). However journalists want to hold on to the notion that "they can produce highly charged accounts of wrongdoing *without* making moral judgements. But, in the application of established standards to the conduct of officials and institutions, they *do* make judgements" (ibid) (my emphasis). Ettema and Glasser go on to argue that when investigative journalists focus on the "real players" (the villains and victims) they set a key structural feature of the story in place and select as well as simplify and interpret the standards that the public can use to make such judgements (1998: 32-33). In this regard, investigative journalists are thus participants of what Condit (1987) describes as the 'crafting of public morality' but are denied by the canons of objectivity the opportunity to explicitly make and more importantly analyse and defend such judgements (ibid). The allegiance to objectivity results in values being submerged into what Hall terms the 'deep structure of journalism' which they argue has never been entirely secure and is therefore never completely submerged (1973). De Burgh argues that investigative journalists appeal to our existing standards of morality, "standards they know that they can rely upon being held by people who they know they will be shocked by their violation" (2000: 15). In this sense investigative journalists "police the boundaries between order and deviance" (ibid).

The notion of objectivity in investigative journalism is important as journalists' guiding philosophy. Even in cases where journalists get personally involved and employ clear value judgements in order to build moral arguments in their stories, they always insist on how objective they tried to be. Ettema and Glasser argue:

> The objectivity of daily journalism, for example, may be reducible to a set of rules – lead with an important fact, quote official sources, and so on but this text bookish objectivity is insufficient for the investigative reporter who is, as one said, "trying to find out what's true". The investigative reporter must then, learn to creatively sustain a conversation with the situation. The mastery of the journalistic craft is not a matter of rule bound objectivity but of mature subjectivity (1998: 22-23).

Christians et al. argue that the seasoned investigative reporter who does not submit uncritically or arbitrary conventions established in the name of objectivity but instead exhibits a mature journalistic subjectivity, "a tolerance of uncertainty, an acceptance of risk and commitment to caring for truth" (2009: 141). They also argue that to equate the concept of objectivity with the monitorial role (investigative journalism) and with the idea of journalistic objectivity is too restricted a view because media information has an interface with other, less neutral activities and

perspectives (2009: 142). This is because journalistic professional practices such as selection, interpretation (direct or implied) "opens the door to subjectivity" (Christians et al. 2009: 142). Ettema and Glasser say that "it is hard to gather and publish information without making value judgements or applying criteria of relevance that have no objective bias" (ibid). Investigative journalism can hardly be accomplished without personal engagement and without deploying some clear value judgements, even if not advocating for them (1998: 22-23). Based on the foregoing discussion, the next section is a distillation of the key ideas and practises that exemplify investigative journalism.

1.6.7 Summary of the main characteristics of investigative journalism

The ideas and practises of investigative journalism can be summarised under the following categories: motivations/subject, techniques, calibre of journalist, framing the story and results/outcomes. These categories are not distinct but overlap and feed into each other as will be seen in the analysis of *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* in Chapters 4-7.

1.6.7.1 The main purposes for investigative journalism are to:

- Get at the 'truth' (de Burgh 2000); clamour for social justice and champion the weak (Protess 1991: 14; Ettema and Glasser 1998); tell when people are being conned (de Burgh 2000); expose corruption, human rights abuses and violation of legal laws (Ettema and Glasser 1998; de Burgh 2000); expose villains, victims and institutions in disarray (Ettema and Glasser 1998); expose the violation of legal laws (de Burgh 2000);
- Provoke public interest and alter public opinion (Protess et al. 1991);
- Bring about corrective action (Protess et al. 1991); bring government officials and those in positions of power into account (de Burgh 2000); pressurise government for reforms (Protess et al. 1991); prosecute wrong doers (de Burgh 2000; Ettema and Glasser 1998; Protess et al. 1991); restore efficiency and effective functioning of institutions (Protess et al. 1991); advocate for policy changes (de Burgh 2000; Ettema and Glasser 1998; Protess et al. 1991);
- Fulfil the social obligations of modern media (Protess et al. 1991).

1.6.7.2 The techniques and methods of the investigative journalist are:

- To interview as many people as possible in order to get as much information as possible (Ettema and Glasser 1998);
- Spend a long time to get to the heart of the story (Protess et al. 1991);
- Sting (setting up a trap so that targets incriminate themselves) (Ettema and Glasser 1998);

- Check records to acquire supporting evidence (de Burgh 2000);
- Verify facts (Ettema and Glasser 1998; Protess et al. 1991; de Burgh 2000);
- Go undercover and use hidden microphones and cameras to get inside information (Berry 2009; Ettema and Glasser 1998; Gaines 2008).

1.6.7.2.1 Investigative journalists frame their stories to:

- Show the forces of good battling with forces of bad (Ettema and Glasser 1998)
- Elicit sympathy for victims and provoke anger against villains (Ettema and Glasser 1998);
- Produce a reason that is 'good enough' (shown through the amount of evidence provided) to alter public opinion, pressure on government officials and corrective action (Ettema and Glasser 1998; Protess et al. 1991).

1.6.7.4 Good investigative journalists must be:

- Inquisitive (de Burgh 2000); Sceptical (de Burgh 2000; Gaines 2008); Curious (de Burgh 2000; Berry 2009); Bold (Berry 2009; de Burgh 2000; Gaines 1994);
- Imaginative(de Burgh 2000; Ettema and Glasser 1998); Resourceful (de Burgh 2000);
- Ingenious (McDougall- Protess et al. 1991); Indefatigable (McDougall- Protess et al. 1991); Able to endure drudgery and discomfort (Protess et al. 1991); Committed (Ettema and Glasser 1998: Gaines 2008); Proactive (Ettema and Glasser 1998); Rigorous (de Burgh 2000; Ettema and Glasser 1998); Have broad general knowledge (Ansell 2009).

The next section is concerned with providing a critical exposition of public journalism.

1.7 Public journalism (under the facilitative role)

This section provides a detailed normative theoretical framework of public journalism. It first defines public/civic journalism and gives some historical background to this press reform movement. In outlining the practical manifestations of public journalism I make use of Nip's (2008) framework which draws on earlier public journalism theorists and present a summary of public journalism's key practices. For a public philosophy on public journalism I turn to Haas (2007) who argues that public journalism cannot be defined only by its practices. He articulates a philosophy for public journalism by drawing on Habermas' (1989) theory of the public sphere and Fraser's (1990) critique thereof.

1.7.1 What is public journalism?

According to Merritt, public journalism is concerned with "going beyond the limited mission of telling the news to a broader mission of helping public life to go well" (1995: 113-114). As seen earlier, public journalism falls under the facilitative role. According to Christians et al. through public journalism's emphasis on engaging publics as citizens and creating shared experiences and fostering mutual understanding, public journalism has made the facilitative role the most nuanced and explicit (2009: 161). Public journalism also differs from conventional journalism in seeing people as citizens rather than as individual consumers, and as potential actors in arriving at democratic solutions to public problems (ibid). The next section looks briefly at the history of public journalism.

1.7.2 The history of public journalism

Haas traces the roots of public journalism to the progressive era particularly the debate between Walter Lippmann and John Dewey in the 1920s, and its underpinnings to the reports of the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the press in the 1940s and 1950s as well as to several theoretical and empirical works on deliberative democracy in the 1990s (2001: 1-2). Lippmann argued that journalism's primary responsibility was to "translate the technical deliberations and actions of political leaders and experts into a publicly accessible language to inform as best as possible, a citizenry incapable of governing itself' (Haas 2007: 2). Dewey (1927) took issue with Lippmann's elitist or expert-based model of democracy and instead called for a more involved citizenry via a more active role for journalism" (Haas 2007: 7).

The United States election in 1988 is seen by Haas as one of the factors contributing to the rise of public journalism (2007: 10). The news coverage of the election was criticised for its focus on the "candidates' personalities, strategies and tactics and who's ahead and who's behind horse race polls" (Eksterowicz, 2000; Anderson, Dardenne & Killenberg, 1995; Carey 1995; Merritt, 1998; Rosen, 1999b). It also "failed to facilitate public debate over substantive ideas and issues, and casting citizens as passive spectators who would eventually ratify the most effective campaign" (ibid). Following the election, scholarly and journalistic observers alike, many of whom subsequently became advocates of public journalism, called for radical changes in election reporting, notably a move away from coverage of candidate strategies and tactics to a focus on substantive policy issues of concern to voters (Fallows 1996; Merritt 1988; Rosen 1991). Public journalism took form as a reform movement within the mainstream media in the early 1990s as an attempt to reduce the perceived widening gaps in society between citizens and

government, and between news organisations and their audiences (Haas 2007: 3). The next section is an elucidation of the key practices in public journalism outlined by Joyce Nip.

1.7.3 Key practices in public journalism

The key practices in public journalism outlined by Nip are summarised into six key headings.

- Listening to the public to help set a citizens' agenda

One of the practices considered key to public journalism is when journalists listen to the public and allow them to set a citizens agenda. According to Nip, listening techniques include conducting polls, surveys, town hall meetings, focus groups, readers' panels, and organising intimate living room or kitchen conversations (2008: 180). Reporters also go to 'third places', where people gather to talk and do things together, to listen to people's concerns (Harwood and McCrehan 2000). Schaffer adds that newsrooms are made accessible (1996b) and the effort to listen to the public is continuous and systematic (Lambeth 1998) reshaping the news agenda in a back and forth cycle (Charity 1995).

- Giving ordinary people a voice

Another key practice is giving 'ordinary people' a voice (Nip 2008: 180). According to Schaffer engaging in "civic mapping requires journalists to plunge a little deeper into the civic layers of our communities, beneath the official and quasi-official zone of elected officials and designated community leaders (2001). Nip proposes that journalists should interview differently, asking questions that open up the conversation and allow people to talk at their own pace. Such newspapers should cite more often or more prominently in the news the views of citizens' organisations or unaffiliated individuals, or featuring 'real people' (Nip 2008: 180). More recent interactive techniques include website interactions and online games (Schaffer 2001b; Thomas 2002).

- Covering stories in a way that facilitates public understanding and stimulates citizen deliberation of the problems behind the stories

In order to achieve the facilitation of public deliberation around public problems, journalists should present stories that focus on issues, sometimes providing historical background or other information connected to the issues (Nip 2008: 180). Journalists also report on areas of agreement, rather than polarising the issues (Blazier and Lemert 2000). Charity says that they should frame the stories along the 'master narrative' which is the progress (or lack thereof) made by the community in problem solving (1995: 86).

- Presenting news to make it more accessible and easier for people to engage in the issues

Journalists should pay attention to the " civic design" (Ford 2000; Ritt 1999) of newspapers by employing fact boxes, check lists, issue maps, reader rails, grids, charts and graphs. They should include "mobilising information in stories in which members of news audience can use to determine how, whether and where to express their attitudes in political influence processes" (Lemert et al. 1977).

- Engaging the community in problem solving

In engaging the community in problem solving, news organisations convene or sponsor meetings with community leaders and ordinary citizens. Journalists should enlist readers to take part in efforts at problem solving (Corrigan 1999) and champion the solutions championed by the community (2008: 180). The next section focuses on Haas's (2007) guiding philosophy for public journalism.

1.7.4 Haas's public philosophy for public journalism

Haas's project in *The Pursuit of Public Journalism* (2007) is to develop a guiding public philosophy for public journalism which is a theoretically based account of how journalists should conceive of the public, what forms of deliberation and problem solving journalists should help promote, and how journalists, in their practice, should facilitate public discourse (2007: 24). Haas argues that without a public philosophy, it is difficult for public journalism advocates to properly criticise existing journalistic practices and defend their ideas from improving those practices (2007: 24). He points out that "it will even be difficult to propose and justify new, more radical practices and to address potential obstacles standing in the way of implementing those practices and avoiding co-optation by purely commercial interests" (ibid). This section is a critical exposition of this 'public philosophy' and it will address four main issues that summarise Haas's (2007) philosophy for public journalism which include the notion of the deliberating public, setting the news agenda, the structure of the public sphere and promoting public problem solving. The next section focuses on the notion of the deliberating public.

1.7.4.1 The deliberating public

According to Haas public journalism should be embedded within Habermas' (1989) "proceduralist-discursive notion of the deliberating public" (2007: 28). A genuine public according to Habermas, comes into being when citizens subject their opinions and their underlying reasons for espousing those opinions, to rational critical evaluation by others, and at the same time subject the opinions of others and their underlying reasons for espousing those

opinions to rational critical evaluation (Haas 2007: 28). Habermas' (1989) notion of a deliberating public committed to common deliberation could be taken to imply that journalists should help create and sustain an open-ended, unbounded public sphere to which all citizens have access and in which all topics of concern to citizens and all opinions available can be articulated, deliberated and critiqued (Haas 2007: 29). Haas suggests that journalists should nurture what Anderson et al calls a "conversational commons" which refers to a site for public dialogue shared by all citizens and accessible to all citizens (1997: 98). The purpose of such a conversational commons, according to Anderson et al, is to provide "a forum in which citizens hear each other's voices, where positions that could not or would not be explored elsewhere are advanced, argued, assessed and acted on and that journalists can help bring that public into being" (ibid).

1.7.4.2 Setting the news media agenda

According to Haas, if journalists, are to help create and sustain a public sphere to which all citizens have access, and in which all topics of concern to citizens can be articulated, deliberated and critiqued, journalists would need to engage "citizens as active partners in the news making process, which is precisely what journalists do in practice" (Haas 2007: 32). Haas calls for more formalised means of involving citizens in the agenda setting process, but he also argues that 'journalists should render more explicit the particular values upon which they ultimately base the news agenda, regardless of whether they include citizens in the decision making process or not" (ibid). Giving citizens unfettered control of the news agenda compromises journalists' ability to maintain a critical editorial and reportorial stance in relation to the community, and forces journalists to gloss over community conflicts for fear of offending certain community segments (Haas 2007: 33). Haas therefore believes that public journalists should ultimately retain the authority to add to or subtract from the agenda that their public listening reveals (ibid).

1.7.4.3 The structure of the public sphere

Following Fraser (1990), Haas encourages journalists to help nurture a public sphere composed of multiple discursive domains in which members of different social groups could articulate and deliberate about their particular concerns among themselves (2007: 40). This he argues will help to accommodate "discursive contestation among a plurality of publics" (ibid). Journalists should also work to bring members of different social groups together within a joint discursive space (ibid). According to Haas, public journalism is "not only about creating the conditions for genuinely open and inclusive public deliberation but also about creating the conditions for joint public problem solving, even if citizens disagree about which problems are politically most

compelling" (2007: 40). The next section is concerned with elaborating on Haas' public problem solving model.

1.7.4.4 Promoting public problem solving

What kind of problem solving should journalists help promote and why? To ensure that the deliberating public brought into being by journalism has more than a temporary existence, Haas argues that journalists should encourage citizens to continue their deliberations and act upon the outcomes within the institutions of the wider civil society, that is the multitude of civic organisations through which citizens can organise themselves for political deliberation and action (2007: 40). Haas argues that while participation in news media sponsored focus groups, roundtable discussions and community forums can be both educational and symbolically satisfying, those venues offer no genuine substitute for sustained public engagement with problems (2007: 40). Such sites according to Glasser "create at most an ad hoc venue for discussion, a small and temporary site for a debate managed by and too often for the press" (1991: 11). Haas believes that journalists should carefully consider which particular kinds of interventions would be required to adequately address given problems before they promote any public problem solving activity (2007: 42).

To ensure that the public problem solving activity promoted corresponds to the nature of given problems, journalists according to Haas need to consider one fundamental question. Can given problems be adequately addressed by citizens themselves or do they require more deep seated, systemic intervention by government officials? Haas argues that "for problems potentially resolvable by citizens themselves, either within a given locality or on a broader scale, journalists should support and promote citizens' own efforts to formulate and enact concrete solutions to those problems for example through a direct participatory form of public problem solving (2000: 45). Haas argues that this could be done by describing what citizens in other localities have done in the past and/ or are presently doing to address similar problems, creating spaces for citizens to deliberate about those problems among themselves, encouraging citizens to join existing or create new (local or larger scale) civic organisations, and publicising citizens' applications for resources (2007: 43).

Haas says that while some problems may be resolvable by citizens themselves, many other problems require collaboration between citizens, experts and government officials to be adequately addressed (2007: 44). To facilitate the creation of such a 'macro public' journalists would need to move beyond what several scholars correctly refer to as their "apparent distrust of expertise, or the faulty belief that expert participation in problem solving would somehow taint, if

not undermine the authentic expression of public opinion, as well as their antagonistic relationship to government, which assumes that the involvement of government officials is inadequate at best and detrimental at worst" (see Iggers 1998; Levine 1998; Parisi 1997; Schudson 1999). Second, and equally important, this problem-solving model implies that journalists would need to reconsider their own role in the process of identifying viable solutions to given problems (Haas 2007: 45).

1.8 Development journalism (under the collaborative role)

It is in 'development journalism' that one tends to see a partnership between the state and the media though their relationship is often unstable and changing (Merritt 1996: 20). The 'collaboration' is not always a formal one, but is usually premised on a commitment by the press to play a positive role in the processes of development. Responsibility tempers press freedom: "journalists can question, even challenge the state, but not to a point where they undermine a government's basic plans for progress and prosperity" (Christians et al. 2009: 201).

Writing in the African context, Domatob and Hall show how development journalism was seen as a "revolutionary tool of African liberation from colonialism and imperialism" and a way to build fragile post-colonial nation states through the creation of a trans-ethnic national consciousness, where it encouraged co-operation and peaceful co-existence between diverse and sometimes hostile communities (1983: 10). African governments were keen to use the media to contribute to national development goals, inform citizens of relevant governmental policies, introduce national leaders, foster political stability, promote national integration and educate its citizens. But, development journalism was soon denounced by African journalists who saw the corruptions of professional journalism which emerged in its name (Domatob and Hall 1983: 12). African governments suppressed press freedom, barred free elections, individual rights and an independent judiciary, often justified on the grounds that the machinery of government was too frail to withstand the effects of a free press that could ferment political discontent and render social integration impossible (Domatob and Hall 1983: 12).

Shah argues that development journalism was similarly prone, in the Asian context, to devolving into a "rationale to take control of mass media to promote state policies, often as a part of larger campaigns of repression" (1996: 143). This is in contrast to the origins of development journalism in the 1960s, where it was "independent journalism that provided constructive criticism of government and its agencies, informed readers how the development process was affecting them, and highlighted local self-help projects" (1996: 143). To avoid being corrupted, newer incarnations of development journalism (see Galtung & Vincent 1992) pointedly avoid

clear claims to support a state-press partnership and instead highlight the importance of a press that promotes citizen involvement in programmes of social change. Shah's notion of emancipatory journalism saw a role for journalists as "participants in a process of progressive social change" (1996: 144). He emphasises roles for development media that "recognise differences among and between marginalised groups" and that "exist alongside and produce content different from the mainstream media" (1996: 162). This more nuanced version of the concept of development journalism is similar in many ways to the claims made for the media under the facilitative and radical roles. But, Christians et al. argue that Shah fails to address the power of the state and "the state's interest in maintaining certain roles for the mainstream media" (2009: 202). Key questions are unanswered. For example, what happens when the state turns to the media for assistance in a nation-building agenda? What is the nature and role of an ostensibly independent press that limits itself, at least in some areas, to 'constructive criticism' of the state?

Articulating and accepting a normatively viable collaborative role for the press requires a different view of the state and state-press arrangements to that of most Western perspectives on press freedom. But are collaborations with the state always dishonourable and indefensible? If South Africa can be said to suffer from a number of conditions of crisis and emergency which pose a threat to society – crime and public safety, HIV/AIDS, poor service delivery, unemployment – then "fully normative agreements" to cooperate between the South African media and state on selected issues of crisis and emergency, may indeed be possible and desirable (Christians et al 2009: 217). These agreements are, in any case, partial and do not imply that journalists have to abandon their other (monitorial and facilitative) roles.

1.9 Tabloid journalism in South Africa

This section is concerned with showing that tabloid journalism's news gathering strategies, which emphasise the experiences of ordinary citizens instead of established elite sources of the mainstream media, resonate with some of the key practices of public journalism (see Nip 2008). The terms 'tabloids' and 'tabloidisation', according to Wasserman have too easily become catch all pejoratives for all that is wrong with South African journalism (2010: xi). Wasserman argues that "the perspective of the professional elite has not bothered to find out why these papers are so popular, what they mean to their readers or how they articulate an experience of daily life in post apartheid South Africa that differs vastly from theirs" (2010: xi). Bird points out that "while critics often call them sleazy, sexy or immoral, the papers in fact cast themselves as guardians of a particular kind of moral code that sits well with their regular readers" (1992: 201). According to Wasserman tabloids tell the true story of the daily living of many. "What exactly it means to tell a true story is more complicated than doing fact checking; it means telling stories that resonate with

the narrative of the people's daily lives, which for millions in post apartheid South Africa remain precarious, dangerous, difficult and uncertain" (2010: ix). Like in investigative journalism, the journalist is the hero while the civil servant, the government bureaucrat or local councillor plays the role of the antagonist (McDonald and Pape, 2002). Steenveld and Strelitz in their analysis of the popular tabloid in South Africa, the *Daily Sun*, argue that this role is significant in South Africa "where there is an acknowledged problem of service delivery to ordinary people" (2010: 535).

In reference to the *Daily Sun*, Steenveld and Strelitz argue that its discourse is "radical populist" (2010: 535) which invokes the Fiskean notion of "the people versus the power bloc" (Fiske, 1989: 28). An example they provide of this position is evident in a front page headline, *'Save us from RDP hell'* (26 November 2007). The story is a critique of the houses provided by the government under its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Wasserman argues that tabloid journalists see themselves as having relationships with their communities in order to influence the conditions of the people (2010: 154). Tabloid newspapers editors and journalists "sometimes cry with the people" as seen when they lend an ear to the marginalised communities and establishing a relationship with them (Wasserman 2010: 154) which shows that tabloid journalists perform monitorial/radical roles when they see themselves as guardians of the ordinary people against the state.

According to Wasserman, tabloid journalists are heroes of their communities but professional outcasts because they cover issues that resonate with the people's lived experiences (2010: 152). A journalist for the tabloid South African newspaper *Sun* said "we are a hero for the have nots because they can see we look out for them, and they like very much to embarrass the guys who are more privileged than they" (ibid). Tabloid journalists repeatedly emphasise that tabloid journalism requires the kind of legwork that the deskbound journalists working for elite newspapers have long ago squandered in favour of telephone and press release journalism (Wasserman 2010: 156). Tabloid journalists often describe their work as a kind of investigative journalism which depends on carefully nurtured community contacts and time spent on the ground. Tabloid reports are taken seriously when they report on abuses of power and are not dismissed as trivial or trash journalism (Wasserman 2010: 156).

1.10 The relationship between the theories

This section is concerned with showing that the four press roles – monitorial, facilitative, collaborative and radical – overlap and therefore need to be looked at in relationship to each other. According to Christians et al., the four roles, need to be understood in the context of their

application and at particular times and no one role precludes the other as media play a multiplicity of roles at different times (2009: 217). "In practise, there is a good deal of overlap between the different roles and the provision of information is essential to all the four roles and is the most basic one though there are certain oppositions and potential conflicts of role (Christians et al. 2009: 32). The collaborative and radical roles are "more distant from each other" (Christians et al. 2009: 32). Christians et al. argue that even if criticism is sometimes constructive, the radical role usually involves a position of opposition to established authority" (ibid).

This thesis will interrogate the way that these roles intersect with one another in the South African context through an exploration of the two projects done by the paper, *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords*. However, it is first necessary to move away from normative theory to explore what Christians et al (2009: ix) call a more "sociological approach" to the study of the media in order to interrogate critically the actual capacity of the commercial news media to fulfil any of its normative roles given the constraints posed by the political, economic and socio-cultural environments within which they are embedded. This chapter has interrogated the normative roles of the media based on the four part typology that is offered by Christians et al. (2009). It began by explaining what a normative theory is and then went on to explain the roles in depth and some of the 'journalisms;' associated with each. The next chapter provides an exposition of the sociological critiques of mainstream journalism and an overview of the political and economic contexts within with *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* were conducted.

Chapter 2

Political, economic and media contexts for the *Slumlords* and *Broken Homes* investigations

2. Introduction

The last chapter gave an overview of Christians et al.'s (2009) four part typology of press roles in a democracy and provided normative theories of some of the 'journalisms' associated with these roles. This chapter moves away from 'normative theory' to 'sociological theory' to understand the political, economic and media contexts within which the *Daily Dispatch* conducted its *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* projects. Sociological theory helps us to understand "structures of power, production and attempts to expose the real interests behind social practices and arrangements" (Calhoun et al 2007: 18-19). In particular, political economy critiques of mainstream media (see Curran 2005, McChesney 2008, Golding and Murdock 2000) are covered in order to develop an appreciation of how commercial, political and socio-cultural factors may have shaped and constrained the *Daily Dispatch*'s fulfilment of its normative roles. On the other hand, while acknowledging that political economy itself has been a subject of scholarly critique, I choose not to go into this debate but just focus on how political economy provides a framework for understanding the context of the production of media texts. I begin with general political economy critiques of the mainstream media including critiques of investigative and public journalism, and move to political economy critiques in the South African context. I argue that these factors affect the way journalists do their work in subtle but powerful ways. Journalists are often 'blind' to their existence as they go about their daily business and the political economist's task is to "bring them to light and explain how they work in order to encourage informed action aimed at eradicating barriers of equity and justice" (Deacon et al. 2007: 9). I also provide information on the housing context in South Africa.

2.1 Political economy critiques of the commercial media, including investigative journalism

The neo-Marxist 'political economy' critique of mainstream, commercial media emerged as a powerful force in Media Studies in the 1970s. Despite various definitions of what it entails, an agreed understanding of this concept is that it looks at the interplay of the economy, politics and power (Curran 2005, McChesney 2008, Golding and Murdock 2000). Mosco sees political economy as the "study of the social relations, particularly the power relations that mutually

constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources including communication resources" (2009: 2). He goes on to say that it is "also characterised by an interest in examining the social whole or the totality of social relations that make up the economic, political, social and cultural areas of life" (ibid).

Political economy, according to Mosco, "has always believed that there is a big picture of society that we need to understand" (2009: 4). The big picture of society is constituted of structures which are "responsible for shaping journalism and media content directly and indirectly" (McChesney 2008: 129). In this vein the value of political economy critiques lie in their ability to "help one to understand the present 'crises' in journalism and to provide insights necessary for constructive action" (McChesney 2008: 32). Owners, advertisers and managers need not directly interfere with or censor editors and journalists but organisational structures transmit values that they internalise as they do their work (McChesney 2008: 129). The next section looks at the relationship between political structures and news production.

2.1.1 Political structures and news production

Durham and Kellner argue that the media are used by institutional power holders to reproduce the dominant ideology in the news production process which results in the sidelining of oppositional viewpoints (2001: 18). This finds support in Schudson who argues that "where the media are not controlled by corporations, they are generally the voices of the state and it would be difficult to find the press a hotbed of radical thought" (2000: 180) as they reinforce the definitions of the political situation evolved by the political elite (Murdock 1973: 172). The professional ideologies of journalists, particularly the organisation of beats creates situations where reporters depend on and get the largest share of their news from official government agencies (Curran 2001; Larsson 2002). The bureaucrat is said to provide a reliable and steady supply of the raw materials needed for news production without having to dispatch any reporters to do any investigations (Schudson 2000: 184). Gans argues that "since the overriding concern for deadline-driven journalists in assessing news sources is efficiency, reporters are led to repeated contact with a very narrow range of sources which tends to reinforce hegemonic ideas" (1980: 128). These raw materials require little or no editing and news organisations use them as they are (ibid). Tuchman in support of this argues that "the beat system for example disperses reporters to where news is most likely to occur, usually centres of power" (1978).

2.1.2 Economic structures and news production

The commercialisation of journalism raises questions about what news is and where it comes from. How is the news media agenda typically set, by whom, and why? How are stories framed, whose voices and definitions of reality predominate in news journalism, and why? McChesney argues that the "decline in resources and the pressure to generate profits pushes factually accurate journalism to concentrate on some stories over others" (2008: 41). Curran and Gurevitch argue that "most media are now given over mainly to entertainment as evidenced by the coverage of public affairs which accounts for only a small part of even news media content, and only a portion of this takes the form of critical scrutiny of government" (1991: 86). Commercial media according to Murdock and Golding are thus part of the "cultural industries and play a pivotal role in matching consumer demands to production" (2005: 60).

Fewer reporters, according to McChesney, mean that "it is easier for public relations executives to get their client's messages into the news unadulterated by journalism" (2008: 41). Public relations executives take advantage of the relationship they have with journalists to provide information packs to journalists which journalists sometimes use word to word (ibid). This has negative implications for "investigative journalism-original research into public issues, once considered the hallmark of feisty "Fourth Estate' journalism, now on the endangered species list" because of the tendency to merely report on what people in power are talking about (McChesney 2008: 41). Commercial news organisations' need to minimise costs and make profit coupled with the reluctance to antagonise powerful sources, are two factors seen by McChesney as largely contributing to the visibility of trivial issues in the media "that give the appearance of controversy and conflict but rarely have anything to do with any significant public issues" (2008: 45). The effect of this is that it results in the dominance of stories that emphasise violence, traffic and airplane accidents, fires or murders in the media.

Another crucial way in which the commercialisation of journalism covertly alters the news is "by constantly pushing journalism to be directed to the lucrative markets desired by media owners and big ticket advertisers" (Curran and Gurevitch 1991: 87; McChesney 2008: 45). The focus of political economy on market, commercialism and the growth of multinational companies as a result of privatisation and free market economies is crucial to our understanding of the growth of sensationalism and bias towards more affluent groups by the media in their pursuit of profit (Kellner and Durham 2001: 19). Given the constant pressure for profit, this concern with generating news content that will attract the most lucrative target audience has grown to an obsession (McChesney 2008: 45). Kellner et al argue that "the days when journalism was a public service directed at the entire population are long gone" (2001: 19). Murdock argues that this has

also had an impact on the diversity of cultural goods in circulation (2000: 76). Media refrain from criticising and investigating the activities of the giant conglomerates to which they belong and become 'lapdogs' (see Curran and Seaton 1991, Hollingsworth 1986).

In light of the political and economic factors that hinder both the commercial and public media in performing its watchdog function, Curran and Gurevitch say that "state watchdogs can bark, while private watchdogs sleep. Yet often both remain somnolent" (1991: 90).

2.1.3 Reliance on primary definers of news

The reliance on 'primary definers' by journalists has produced vociferous debates about who wields too much power and how this power manifests itself in the news. While some scholars believe that the media has the most power others are in opposition to this view, arguing that the media are "subordinate to institutional power holders" (Larsson 2002: 22). Wasserman and De Beer argue that reporting that never seeks to move beyond the event or the official release allows those in power to set the agenda (2005: 10). According to Larsson the question of who has the most power (politicians or the media) is both delicate and complex but both politicians and the media can be judged to exercise power in the relationship in the sense that the power of societal institutions can depend on the media's power since the former uses the latter's work logic to their own advantage (2002: 22).

Hall et al. express the view that "institutions specify and determine what news is" thereby resulting in politicians setting the news agenda exacerbating the neglect of ordinary voices in the news and the weakening of the watchdog role (1978: 57). Since powerful institutions are positioned at the top of "a hierarchy of credibility journalists are likely to take the frameworks for understanding events offered by representatives of such institutions as a starting point for their reports and thus become the primary definers of topics (Hall et al. 1978: 58). Hall et al. do not suggest that other possible sources, including those who might contest the primary definitions of the powerful, will be barred from any access to news agendas but that their views or interpretations will be regarded as secondary definitions or that they have to work within the 'terms of the debate' already established by the primary definers (1978: 58). This theory of primary definition was critiqued by Philip Schlesinger (1990) who, while wanting "to retain a theory of dominance," still insisted that there were more opportunities for non-official news sources and politically marginal groups to intervene in the defining of news agendas than implied by the concept of primary definition. However, the reliance on official sources gives the news a very conventional and mainstream feel and does not always lead to a rigorous examination of the major issues (McChesney 2008: 32). McChesney further argues that if journalists do not

investigate those in power, "the political system becomes less responsive and corruption grows" (ibid).

2.1.4 Critique of the 'watchdog' role of investigative journalism

The market according to Curran "can give rise not to independent watchdogs serving the public interest but to corporate mercenaries who adjust their critical scrutiny to suit their private purpose" (2005: 125). McChesney argues that "the largest media firms are members in good standing in the corporate community and closely linked through business relations, shared investors, and interlocking directors and shared political values with each other. This pushes the corporate news media as Tom Shales puts it, to paint as rosy a picture of the economy as possible" (cited in McChesney 2008: 52). Christians et al. argue that "the press in its monitorial role is primarily accountable to its own audiences, clients and sources for the way it carries out this role" (2009: 145) but the market however can silence the media watchdogs altogether when they are an integral part of the system of power (Curran 2005: 125). Curran argues that even in societies where market based media has a more independent and critical relationship to government, appearances can be deceptive as media attacks on official wrongdoing can follow private agendas. "Fearless feats of investigative journalism in these circumstances are not necessarily the disinterested acts undertaken on behalf of the public that they appear to be" (McChesney 2008: 47). Christians et al. argue that the media has "failed to deliver an adequate survey of the environment on a case by case basis and also at an institutional level, as a result of commercial undertakings and economic profit goals which have replaced political or professional objectives" (2009: 145). The failure of the press as a watchdog becomes evident when it acts as a 'guard dog' for many vested interests (Christians et al. 2009: 150). The 'guard dog' metaphor for example suggests that "the media perform as a sentry not for the community as a whole, but for groups having sufficient power and influence to create and control their own security systems" (Donohue et al. 1995: 115). While Curran is cynical about the notion of private media as "tribunes of the public" (2005: 134) and stresses the need to take into account the full range of influences shaping journalism, he allows scope for countervailing forces. Curran argues that the "adoption of the watchdog role by the privately-owned media is driven by the need to maintain audience interest in order to be profitable and also to sustain public legitimacy in order to avoid societal retribution" (2005: 127).

While some believe that investigative journalism is very expensive, "small publications commitment to investigation rests on another key argument that investigative journalism wins readers and grows publications" (Ansell 2009: 10). Gavin MacFayden, director of the UK based

Centre for Investigative Journalism made the point cogently in his address to the 2007 Taco Kuiper Awards ceremony for investigative journalists in Johannesburg:

> When serious investigations appear, people talk about it. Many know, driven by word of mouth. Sales rise, viewing figures climb, programmes acquire real credibility and more importantly they achieve a loyal following. When news really affects people, they talk about it and they will follow it. This seems to be true in most countries. It also affects the culture of the press. Editors and producers become more sophisticated practitioners, or more combative, knowing how to use media law to enable rather than put the brakes on exposure, building viewers and readers by more aggressive reporting. (Cited in Ansell 2009)

Christians et al. argue that trying to please and interest an audience does not necessarily reduce journalism's critical edge, since political scandal and its exposure can have important accountability value while also engaging the public's interest (2009: 153). Journalists in different contexts also embark on investigative journalism in their attempts to set the agenda instead of those in positions of power. However, resource shortages can hinder the media in playing the watchdog role effectively despite the fact that it grows audiences as shown above. Calvert's definition of investigative journalism is evidence of the large number of resources that are required in information gathering for investigative journalism and that the lack of them hinders the effective accomplishment of the investigative journalist's quest:

> Some stories you make five calls, some twenty. When you are making a hundred, that's investigative journalism. The story may land in your lap – it's the substantiation that makes it an investigative story because when you realise people are lying to you, blocking you, then you have to find different ways of getting hold of the information and it can take a lot longer. Also you have to be very careful when you are making serious allegations against people, and then the evidence really matters. (De Burgh 2000: 18)

This quotation serves to show that in the quest to discover the truth, a lot of effort, time and resources are necessary. Lack of resources makes journalists to rely on information that is provided by political spin doctors and government officials as part of their plan to define what becomes available in the public agenda (Wasserman and De Beer 2005: 10). According to Christians et al. this tendency is likely to favour the reproduction of news from sources that are best organised to supply what the media want: news agencies, public relations firms, official sources or other well financed organisations or lobby groups as seen above (2009: 153). The effect is the limiting of journalism's independence and critical thrust, as well as preventing a full and balanced monitoring of what is going on; increasing the chance of news being propaganda (Christians et al. 2009: 153). Lewis (2006) said that

> In recent years nearly all of our media corporations have been actually reducing their commitment to journalism, reducing their editorial budgets, early 'retiring' thousands of reporters and editors from their newsrooms in order to keep their annual profit margins

high and their investors happy harvesting their investments from a mature industry (cited in Harber 2010: xx).

2.1.5 Government interference

Public media's independence in different contexts has also been compromised by government interference. Curran and Park (2000), Downing (1996), Sparks (1998), Waisbord (2000) argue that there is no lack of examples where public media have acted as little more than mouthpieces of government. This is evident when licenses to publish and broadcast have only been allocated to government supporters and journalists have had ministers of information dictate to them what to write and what not to write and those journalists who cannot be intimidated have been killed or jailed (Curran and Park 2000). Nerone argues that there is "no independent media in its strictest sense; all news organisations are shaped, constrained, informed, subjected to diverse interests, and are a part of a network of relationships" (1994 cited in Waisbord 2000: xvii). Altschull says that occasional reports of investigative journalism temporarily disrupt the symbiotic relationship between the media and power leaving room for suspicion about whose interests are really served by investigative reports (1984).

Serino argues that "African journalists who dare speak truth to power often themselves become the prey of thugs and government authorities alike. Assaults, imprisonment, torture, censorship and death are well known (Ansell 2009: 2). Christians et al. point out the problem of access to information held by governments or private organisations and not in the public domain as another factor that hinders the media in its performance of investigative journalism (2009: 153). They go on to state that the "information that is made available is that which predominantly favours the authorities, as distinct from the public" (2009: 153). Repressive media laws, lack of resources and a widespread culture of secrecy among officials are but a few of the challenges for journalists questioning the conduct of those with money, connections and power (Ansell 2009: 1). In South Africa there is a push by the government to make into law the Protection of Information Bill to restrict the amount of information that journalists will have access to (see Duncan 2010). However Christians et al argue that legal efforts have been made in many countries to extend public access to information (2009: 153).

2.1.6 Mediatisation and hunger for scoops

Christians et al argue that mediatisation is another obstacle to investigative journalism as it "results in a strong attachment to dramatic narrative, compelling characters and personalities" (2009: 154). There is a premium on action, surprise, excitement and emotional involvement. Such criteria put the form of presentation before content (Christians et al. 2009: 154). One well attested

factor is the scoop, which gives relatively greater value to unique ownership of some information than to its deeper significance (ibid). New York Times Ombudsman Daniel Okrent argues that the hunger for scoops among journalists leads to a tolerance by news organisations of stories based on anonymous and often partisan sources (Christians et al. 2009: 154). The citizen looking for warning or advice could certainly be ill served by this custom. The net effect of mediatisation, they argue is a "distortion of public discourse and a flight from substantive information" (Christians et al. 2009: 154). The next section focuses on how political economy critiques can be applied to public journalism.

2.2 Political economy critiques of public journalism

This section looks at political economy critiques of public journalism. Public journalism came as a reform movement predicated at transcending some of the limitations of mainstream media discussed above. Nevertheless public journalism has been critiqued for the same limitations. For example, it has been criticised for how its emphasis on addressing citizen concerns "could be used by management to justify more of the narrow market research traditionally conducted by newspaper circulation departments thereby becoming just another step along the path to total commercialism" (Richards 2000: 178). With regard to commercialism, advocates of public journalism are "faulted for ignoring the commercial context of most public journalism, and more specifically for failing to acknowledge that its chances of promoting broad based citizen participation in democratic processes are inherently limited by media owners' and advertisers' commercial interests in catering to demographically attractive audiences, whose needs are not necessarily the most compelling" (Iggers 1998; Pauly 1999). This finds support in Compton who argues that "one of the truisms of the political economy of communication is that media are primarily in the business of delivering audiences to advertisers and not all audiences are treated equally since those more affluent are more valuable than others" (2000: 463). Hardt points out that "not only is public journalism's emphasis on addressing audience concerns not revolutionary, but are likely to serve the circulation and profit interests of media owners and advertisers" (1999).

In defence of public journalism, Haas and Steiner report that public journalism projects have "at best produced only modest increases in circulation or readership because of lack of evidence to suggest that public journalism increases profits because projects are costly" (2006: 243). Glasser et al. make a crucial point in their assessment of public journalism arguing that "even if a robust public life brings more readers to the newspaper, it is unlikely that advertisers will want to subsidise content for those readers unless they are sufficiently affluent and in other ways appropriate for the goods and services being advertised (1998: 214). However Haas and Steiner argue that there is evidence to suggest that public journalism projects take up issues and address

citizen groups that are commercially unpopular (2006: 243). Contrary to the accusation that public journalism represents pandering, "public journalism projects have not been geared to the wealthy and powerful segments that this claim implies would be most attractive to news management" (2006: 243). They concede that it is possible that some news organisations have embraced public journalism out of a concern with profit, but point to a survey by Loomis and Meyer (2000) which found that companies whose top executives expressed more concern for social responsibility than for generating profits were significantly more likely to practise public journalism than companies whose top executives favoured profits over social responsibility. Haas and Steiner also say that an appeal to the civic conscience of individual editors and reporters will not inspire fundamental changes to the commercial logic of news organizations, but suggest that top executives with civic consciences can and do ensure that news organisations are guided, at least in part, by a concern for social responsibility (2006: 243). Haas and Steiner also argue that "commercial interests and democratic concerns coexist within news organisations practising public journalism" (ibid).

Critics complain, "if public journalism advocates assume that merely appealing to the civic conscience and goodwill of individual journalists and managers can ameliorate problems, and if they cast contemporary problems of public communication as rhetorical rather than structural, then public journalism will neither demand nor inspire more fundamental changes in the corporate logic of news organisations" (Charity 1995). These critiques of public journalism – similar to the critiques of mainstream, commercial journalism – fit comfortably into the neo-Marxist political economy approach (see Mosco 1996, Curran 2005, and McChesney 2008). But, as we have seen, the political economy approach aims to avoid economic reductionism, and instead foregrounds the interplay between economic, political and cultural practices and structures and sees them as providing the context – the opportunities and constraints – within which actors struggle to mobilise material and symbolic resources. Yet Haas would acknowledge that even at its most critical, public journalism is a 'reformist' movement – it is part of mainstream journalism and works in the capitalist marketplace within long-standing organisational, institutional and professional power structures (2007: 25). This begs the question: Does public journalism's location within the market prevent it from mounting a serious challenge to the power relations of the mass media and the deep structures of dominance in the wider society?

Unlike political economists, most public journalism advocates tend to priviledge the agency of public journalists over the structure of the commercial media system and wider society within which they work. In addition, public journalism theorists have produced convincing empirical

evidence suggesting that market imperatives do not necessarily prevent news organisations from promoting broad-based citizen participation in democratic processes (Haas and Steiner 2006: 242). For example, many public journalism projects have sponsored deliberative forums such as focus groups, roundtable discussions, and town-hall meetings for people of lower socio-economic status and other marginalised or minority groups not coveted by advertisers. These news organisations have dealt with difficult, unpopular problems such as race, poverty, inner-city crime, alcohol and drug abuse, child care, domestic violence, health care, homelessness, immigration, public housing, racial profiling, unemployment, and welfare (Friedland and Nichols, 2002). The previous sections provided universal political economy critiques of the monitorial and facilitative role of mainstream media. The next section attempts to locate some of these debates in the South African context.

2.3 Democratic deficit in South Africa

It is particularly difficult to practice either investigative journalism or public journalism in the South African context which is grassroots driven and results in positive and sustainable changes as seen in Protess et al (1991) because this country is characterised by deep social inequalities which have limited the effective political incorporation of subordinate groups and contributed to a crisis of accountability (Heller 2009: 126). According to Heller civil society formations born out of the anti-apartheid struggle retain significant capacity but have little effective leverage over political society which has resulted in the containerisation of civil society and the fuelling of class polarisation in South Africa (ibid). Heller argues that democratic practices are being eroded and subordinate groups find themselves increasingly disempowered politically (2009: 126). Civil society is increasingly being subordinated to political society and deliberation is being displaced by power which is consequential for the sustainability of democracy since a weakened civil society cannot perform three critical democratic functions:

- provide a space in which citizens can meaningfully practice democracy on a day to day basis;
- anchor the legitimacy of political practices and institutions in vigorous public debate;
- serve as a countervailing force to the power driven logic of political society (Heller 2009: 4).

While South Africa enjoys high levels of consolidated representative democracy, it does not translate into a democratic society (Heller 2009: 125). Heller argues that "given that local government is absent or weak in much of the developing world, there are in fact very few points of contact with the state for ordinary citizens (2009: 128). Van Donk notes that "local government has become increasingly insulated and centralised. In the name of efficiency and

more rapid delivery, the ANC has managerialised decision making processes and reduced the quality and scope of participatory processes created under the RDP" (2008). Highly paid consultants (often working for 'non-profits') have taken the place of community representatives in occupying the space between the state and society. Citizens, according to Heller, find it difficult to engage the state effectively because of two reasons:

- the surface area of the state remains quite limited especially when it comes to local government;
- political parties not only monopolise the channels of influence but also exert considerable power in setting the agenda that is determining which issues, claims and even identities enter the political domain (2009: 132).

State-society relations in the developing democracies tend to be dominated by patronage and populism, with citizens having either no effective means of holding government accountable (other than periodic elections) or being reduced to dependent clients (2009: 132). Heller also notes that "civil society has become deeply bifurcated between an organized civil society that effectively engages with the state and a subaltern civil society that is disconnected from the state and political society" (2009: 138). Business groups, professionalised NGOs and organised labour continue to be well positioned to engage with the state, while "subaltern civil society, and especially the urban poor, has more or less been sidelined from the political process in South Africa" (Heller 2009: 138). The next section looks at current state-media debates in South Africa.

2.4 Current state-media debates about the role of journalism in post-apartheid South Africa

The role of the media in post apartheid South Africa remains an issue that generates vociferous debate in light of the tense relationship that exists between the government and the media (Harber 2010: xv) and lack of participation by sub-altern members of civil society as argued by Heller (2009) above. Wasserman and De Beer point out that the focus of the debates "is on conflicts as they relate to the difference in understanding the media's role in post apartheid society, that is, whether the media should serve the 'public interest' or the 'national interest" (2005: 36). Critics argue that "the term national interest constitutes an attempt by government to influence the media to toe the official line, and therefore sounds the alarm bells" (Wasserman and De Beer 2005: 47). According to Wasserman and de Beer, the public interest, on the other hand, "seems to represent a broader society, which has to be provided with unbiased information in order to make rational political choices" (2005: 47). The media adopted the concept of the public interest as the foundation of their professional role since the end of apartheid to mean that the media is a defender of the public's interest in the face of possible abuse of government power and should act

as the fourth estate (Wasserman and de Beer 2005: 45). The argument by government for the media to serve the 'national interest' emerged in the context of anti- apartheid discourse. The concept of nation as used by the liberation movements was linked to a history of anti-colonial thought and struggles for self-determination, as contextualised and adapted for South Africa (Wasserman and de Beer 2005: 45). Post- apartheid critiques of the hegemonic potential of the concept 'national interest' according to Wasserman and de Beer should therefore also take cognisance of earlier attempts to define nation in liberatory terms" (ibid). Leading ANC policy maker and thinker Joel Netshitenzhe says that a "consensus should be reached between the government and the media since the public and national interest are complementary under popular democracy" which suggests that a more collaborative role between the state and the media can help to serve the interests of the public (cited in Duncan 2003: 5).

Wasserman and de Beer point out that "questions of political economy remain very important when assessing the role and the position of the media within South African society, but interests, power relations and inequalities also play out on the terrain of discourse. The question which remains is of how the media could remain free to play its role as a watchdog of democracy" (2005: 47). The ANC and the government have meanwhile critiqued the South African commercial media for their alleged infatuation with more adversarial, watchdog elements of the monitorial role, the privileging of freedom of the press over the rights to dignity and equality; their lack of accountability; their neglect of poorer sections of the media market; and for their apparent eschewal of a more collaborative role that might support a 'national interest', 'nation building' and the developmental goals of the post-apartheid state (see Harber 2010; Duncan 2003; Wasserman and De Beer 2005). The ANC has also accused commercial media of being "intrusive, embarrassing, irresponsible, disruptive, vulgar, uninformed and exercising power without accountability" (Duncan 2010: 4). As Duncan further argues "this was not the ANC's principal concern in 2002 as it called for a reorganisation of the country's media model with a strong emphasis on public and community media" (Duncan 2010: 4). Duncan goes on to argue that "at this stage (2002), it would seem that the ANC's media policy was attempting to articulate an alternative vision for South Africa's media system that moved beyond what Curran has described as the 'public watchdog perspective' with all its deficiencies and evolved towards a "Habermasian conception of the media as an instrument of the popular will" (Curran 1991: 100-102).

At the ANC's National congress held in Polokwane in 2007, the ANC adopted a more combative tone towards the commercial print media (Duncan 2010: 5). The conference resolution charged that "some fractions of the media continue to adopt an anti transformation, anti-ANC stance.

Harber writes that it was much more than a critique of media inadequacy or faults as it identified what was seen as a hostile ideological onslaught by the ANC's enemies (2010: xviii). A call was made for the media to play a more positive role in the developmental economy thereby calling for a collaborative relationship with the media (ibid). More recently, the ANC called for the formation of a Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) "dismissing the existing self regulation through an independent media ombudsman as inadequate to sufficiently protect the rights of the individual citizens, communities and society as a whole" (Duncan 2010: 5). The ANC also condemned brown envelope journalism saying that it called for statutory regulation. The proposed tribunal "will be accountable to parliament and adjudicate on complaints heard by the press ombudsman but critics have argued that it will stifle criticism of the party and of the government" (Duncan 2010: 1). Harber argues that "it was no coincidence that those calling for it were almost all the subject of recent embarrassing exposés in the media" (2010: xix). According to Harber, the ANC has described its values as "the developmental state, collective rights, values of caring and sharing, community, solidarity, ubuntu, non sexism, working together" and the mainstream media's as "neo liberalism, a weak and passive state, and overemphasis on individual rights and market fundamentalism" (Harber 2010: xx). He goes on to say that "these descriptions are caricatures which bear little relationship to reality but they do set up the media and the ANC as ideological foes on either side of the nation's political battlefield" (ibid). Duncan posits that the:

> ANC has failed to deepen the debate about media accountability in the wake of twin problems of media concentration and commercialisation and will fail to address systemic problems in print media coverage flowing from the realities of largely commercial media system operating in a country characterised by extremely high levels of poverty and inequality (2010: 1).

According to the ANC, while editors may profess their independence from both owners and advertisers and their commitment first and foremost to comprehensive accurate and fair coverage, there is significant pressure on newspapers to deliver a product that sells and sells to those sections of society whom advertisers are really drawn (cited in Harber 2010: xiii). Harber dismisses crude political economy views of the media which give no agency to journalists within profit making enterprises to act honourably and independently, and which portray the media as a monolithic single-minded institution (2010: xiii). Harber argues that the rise of tabloids, for example the *Daily Sun*, give voice and coverage to voices that were previously absent from most of our media for example working class South Africans (ibid). Meanwhile, contempt for the media began to show itself in much of the ruling party's relations with the media in response to the sharply critical and hostile media in light of coverage about government's failure to deliver on campaign promises. The ANC said that "we brought liberation and we brought a constitution

which promoted media freedom and promoted access to information and now you turn on us and treat us like the previous government" (cited in Harber 2010: xvii).

The print media in South Africa is also under attack from a number of challenges that affect the media's performance of its normative functions locally and globally (Wasserman and De Beer 2005: 38). Global shifts in ownership, issues confronting the media in Western countries around the interaction between locality and globality in the public sphere are increasingly also being raised in the South African media context (Wasserman and De Beer 2005: 39). Tettey argues that "in many countries, governments and newspaper readers are complaining about excessive media commercialisation and concentration of ownership and declining ethical standards and the ineffectiveness of press councils in dealing with these concerns" (2006: 229-230). Critics have also pointed out that the print media's class base, structural logic of circulation, distribution networks, price structure and advertising that has as their target the lucrative and arguably still largely white, or at least affluent black elite market (Jacobs 2003: 146). Duncan points out that the ANC has raised similar concerns arguing that "globalisation and commercialisation had skewed the country's media towards well off South Africans which it argues distorts the democratic process and debate" (ANC 2002: 4).

On the other hand, one can argue that since there are significant cracks in the current Zuma-dominated power network, disagreements can "produce tip-offs from rival, elite groups, which can trigger investigative journalism", and "conflicts can generate media debate. (Curran 2005: 134). The emergence of investigative journalism in recent years in South Africa is attributed to several reasons including the value of both journalistic and financial exposé and the divisions in the ruling party. In reference to the latter, Harber says that:

> It is when those in power are fighting among themselves that leaks tend to happen. Those fighting for political advantage throw mud at each other, and sometimes the media is the best catapult. Battles over state power and resources are reflected in the media not necessarily as the hard slog of investigation but often through timely and well placed leaks. At times like this, a liberation movement in power lose its sheen and its moral authority- opening way for more aggressive reporting. (2010: xxv)

Duncan proposes that "in the changing information environment, new and inventive ways need to be found to ensure that those who set themselves up as doing journalism practise what they preach when it comes to accountability and transparency and become transparent and accountable themselves" (2010: 4).

2.5 Housing in South Africa

This section critically discusses the housing situation in South Africa in order to provide context to the problem of inadequate housing delivery in the Eastern Cape. Several researches show that the post-apartheid government has not met its own targets in relation to the provision of proper housing to previously marginalised black communities. Millions of black people continue to live in shacks. According to a report by the Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM), it will take about 45 years for the current housing backlog in the country to be addressed as the housing department continues to face challenges.[2]These include the lack of a strong strategic plan, the shortage of staff, and the inability to manage housing budgets (HRSC; Pillay 2010). Pillay states that "most respondents at local and district level felt that targets were achievable within allocated budgets – but that operational, political and external environmental factors posed challenges to delivery in 2010 (2010). Pillay points out that a challenge to effective delivery in South Africa is the perceived lack of delivery by several government units including the Deeds Office and provincial departments together with contestation over different mandates of the three spheres of government and a perceived lack of consultation by the province with municipalities (2010).

The lack of 'collaboration' between government and citizens is seen by Pillay as a major hindrance to an effective housing policy:

> Contrary to its participatory rhetoric, communities and other actors have not established a positive or synergistic relationship, but rather one best defined by a zero-sum perspective: the private sectors' interests have hijacked the participatory discourse, and communities' interests have been marginalised (2010).

The effect of this "zero sum perspective" is evident from the studies coming out of South Africa since 1995 which show that community participation has been limited in processes of government housing development (Tomlinson 1999; Bond 2000). Critics point out that "while community participation may ameliorate communities' immediate problems, it will seldom continue beyond the life of the specific projects and does not result in any greater community influence in decision making" (Pillay 2010). Shah argues that communities especially women within them may become pools of cheap labour and do not challenge their larger political and economic contexts" (1996: 143). This calls for policies that come from and are driven by communities and are not government centred. It is however argued that "in actuality the participatory arrangements may fall prey to political abuse and replicate unjust

[2] For research on housing see www.psam.org.za

development practices by benefiting the more powerful and more vocal for example men (Nelson and Wright 1995; Guijt and Shah 1998).

Another factor contributing to the creation of slums is the building of sub-standard houses under the Reconstruction and Development Programme scheme (RDP) (Pillay 2010: 23). The use of emerging contractors which lack capacity for the task has resulted in the building of substandard houses most of which have collapsed and become vandalised by criminals (ibid). Other challenges are the difficulty of delivering water and other services to settlements spread across hilly terrain, which are inaccessible by trucks (Pillay 2010: 23). Water scarcity hampers the mixing of mortar and harsh coastal weather conditions necessitate additional plastering to housing units. Unscrupulous contractors and sub-standard building materials have lead to poor quality units being built and then scrapped (ibid). Critics also argue that another weakness of the RDP scheme itself is building rows of separate houses far away from jobs, and other essential services (Pillay 2010). The scheme has also been criticised for failing to provide affordable student housing in urban areas (ibid).

In a media statement, Human Settlements Minister Tokyo Sexwale warned the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements last November that a number of provinces were under-performing when it came to the delivery of low-cost housing. All nine provinces were asked to provide the national department with "recovery plans" to demonstrate how they were going to meet their monthly and annual delivery targets (Daily Dispatch 2010). According to the Director-General of Human Settlements, Thabane Zulu, "in line with good governance and legislation, after having studied the delivery plans and consulted with the provinces, the Minister is considering the practicality of transferring funds from provinces which are lagging behind, to provinces where there are approved business plans in place" (Daily Dispatch 2010). According to Zulu, there have been detailed discussions with all the provinces and it is clear that serious challenges remain in the, Eastern Cape and they may have to forfeit a portion of their annual human settlements grant. While this can be seen as an effort to encourage provincial governments and local municipalities to show a serious commitment to provide housing to the poor and mostly marginalised groups, it will see these provinces losing a significant chunk of funding for doing this work.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on a variety of theoretical frameworks and perspectives to provide an analytical overview of some of the political and media contexts within which the *Daily Dispatch*

produced its *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* projects. This has afforded insight into some of the conceptual and practical constraints, threats and difficulties faced by the *Daily Dispatch* in its endeavours, but also some of the opportunities afforded by these projects, which will be discussed in this study. The next chapter looks at the methodology and methods employed in the research.

Chapter 3

Research methodology

3. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used for exploring the origins, purposes and journalistic practices of two *Daily Dispatch* projects, namely *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords*. In this chapter, I discuss critical realism which is the epistemological framework that informs this research and then go on to the qualitative methodology which was employed. I then go on to discuss the research design and methods of data collection and data analysis techniques. I employ a two-stage approach research design namely qualitative content analysis and semi structured interviewing which I discuss in relation to the goals of the research. I also go on to talk about the sampling techniques used in choosing the articles that were analysed and respondents interviewed for the research. The sample size and the justification for its choice are also discussed before concluding with a discussion on how the data collected was analysed and the problems encountered during the study and how they were overcome. The methodological approach was significant for illuminating some of the limitations of the research and how future research can help overcome them.

3.1 Epistemological considerations: Critical realism

This research was undertaken within a broadly 'critical realist' epistemological framework. Supporters of this position agree with interpretive scholars that "the social world is reproduced and transformed in daily life," (Bhaskar 1989: 4). They insist that everyday action cannot be understood properly without taking account of the broader social and cultural formations that envelop and shape it" (ibid). This argument rests on two core assumptions: first that structures are always enabling (providing the conditions and resources for action) as well as constraining (placing limits on what is possible and feasible) (Giddens 1984: 25). Giddens points out that "structures are constituted through action and action is constituted structurally" (1984: 25). The role of the critical realist therefore is to identify these structures in the "interests of abolishing unwanted and oppressive constraints on social and personal choices, and developing needed, wanted and empowering rules for social life" (Bhaskar 1989: 6). Hence the researcher's use of the political economy framework in order to understand, for example, patterns of ownership and the daily routines of journalism that impact on media production and constrain journalistic agency.

Critical realism, like positivism rejects the philosophical idealism underpinning the interpretive argument which claims that social reality exists only in the ways in which people choose to imagine it, and both pursue a realist philosophical position which accepts that there are social and cultural structures shaping people's options for action, but existing independently of their awareness of them (Deacon et al. 2007: 9). Critical realists then argue for an understanding of the relationship of social and cultural structures to everyday activity that is based on a transformational conception of human activity (Bhaskar 1983: 3). General structures generate a variety of possible responses some of which may challenge and change prevailing circumstances rather than confirm them. However because "these underlying formations do not correspond with common sense understandings, they usually remain invisible or opaque to people as they go about their daily business" (Deacon 2007: 9). The critical analyst's task is to bring them to light and explain how they work in order to encourage informed action aimed at eradicating barriers, equity and justice (ibid).

Critical realism is concerned with generative mechanisms underlying and producing observable events' and everyday meaning systems, and with the links between these levels (Bhaskar 1989: 2). Critical realism's strength lies in the fact that it enables one to get a comprehensive account of the organisation of meaning through its concern with the underlying formations that organise meaning making, as well as with how people make sense of their world on a day-to-day basis (ibid). With regards to media production, critical realism enabled this researcher to focus on the structures of power and control that constrained the editorial staff at the *Daily Dispatch* and helped me in collaboration with the research subjects to understand how the projects could be done differently (Deacon et al. 1999: 13). It is critical realism that provided me "with a set of perspectives on society and nature and on how to understand them" (Bhaskar 1989: 3).

As can be seen from Chapters one and two, this study has drawn on a number of broadly 'critical' theoretical frameworks which provide the lens through which the primary research data was collected at the micro level. However, having *a priori* theoretical frameworks carries the danger that it can "lead to a false consensus – making the data fit the framework – or failing to see the unexpected" (Simons 2009: 33). Building theory from the data has the advantage of being grounded in the 'lived' experience of participants and the peculiar dynamics of the South African context, leading to a unique understanding or potential theory of this case – although the difficulty here is generating a theory from contrary, complex qualitative data (ibid).

3.2 Qualitative research

The methodological approach of this research is qualitative, an interpretive methodological approach in which I employ the use of a case study. Qualitative research is defined as a situated activity locating the observer in the world and consisting of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible (Denzin et al. 2003: 4). Denzin et al. also point out that qualitative research involves "an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world and so they study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (2003: 5).

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical methods (case study, personal experience, interviews, cultural texts and productions that describe routine problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives). Miles and Huberman argue that qualitative research "is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a field or situation. These situations are 'banal' or normal ones, reflective of the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies and organisations" (1994: 6).

The role of the researcher in qualitative research was to gain a holistic systemic encompassing, integrated overview of the context under study: its logic, its arrangements, its explicit and implicit rules (Miles and Huberman 1994: 6). Drawing on critical realism and political economy, the researcher could engage in a conversation with her subjects while being critical of what was being said and the conversation provided an opportunity to the research participants to engage in "critical reflection and analysis of their practice" (Maguire 1987: 38). The researcher also attempted to capture data on the perceptions of local actors "from the inside" through a process of deep attentiveness and empathetic understanding (Miles and Huberman 1994: 6).

3.3 The research context and research relationships

Both the key 'research subjects' and I, as researcher, attempted to play a critical, 'emancipatory' role in relation to examining the origins, purposes and outcomes of the *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* projects. We shared the same broad knowledge interests and goals in the research process. The hope was that the research process might contribute to ongoing efforts to critique and reform mainstream, commercial journalism practices, so that they might better serve the needs and interests of South African civil society, especially subaltern civil society. The editors and journalists were more than willing to participate in the study as it provided them with the opportunity to reflect on their everyday work, and determine how they could better do it with the

overarching goal of ensuring active citizen engagement in setting the news agenda, in problem solving and in promoting government accountability.

The point of departure for the research was that all the subjects had knowledge of investigative journalism but not necessarily of public journalism. As such I was not at the same level of understanding with the journalists though I was almost on a par with the former editor Andrew Trench who had read a great deal on public journalism. This researcher's preferred way of working was thus to see the *Daily Dispatch* journalists as research 'participants' who were "engaged in the study in a shared experience that they can value, if not partly own" (Simons 2009: 36). There was an acknowledgement that I was attempting to research with them, not simply gathering data on or about them for my own project as a result of their participation in the research in order to understand how they can do their work better. The more I read I found myself having to go back to my research subjects and ask more questions. In doing this, the researcher was playing out on the contention by Rosen that research is a way of studying the press in common with journalists, where they are not the objects of inquiry, or targets of an academic critique, but co-producers of a form of understanding that could not exist without them. It is reasoning with, rather than knowledge about others (1998: 35).

Conducting the case study in this way involved engaging with the key participants throughout the process, "documenting their perspectives and judgements, negotiating meaning and interpretations with them using accessible methods and language" (Simons 2009: 36). Undertaking the interviews was not easy to accomplish as journalists are under constant deadline pressures which required a lot of compromises and patience in order to come up with convenient times for both the researcher and the subjects. Sometimes the researcher had to cut the interviews in the middle upon the request of the interviewees who needed to attend to other commitments which made the interview lose its flow. At the time when I started conducting my interviews, the editor Andrew Trench had to move to Cape Town to his new job at *Media 24*. Follow up questions had to be done via e-mail because of resource constraints and making up time to respond to the questions was a big challenge as a result of his busy schedule. Ntsaluba, the journalist responsible for the two investigations also had to move to his new job with the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper in Johannesburg. This was before the researcher had made her first contact with him, so the first interview was done via telephone and follow up interviews were done via email. Again it took a long time for him to respond because of his busy schedule. The follow-up stories of *Slumlords* were done by Sabelo Sikiti whom the researcher was able to interview via telephone. Jan Hennop, the online editor could only respond to questions via email due to his busy schedule. Following up electronically was a big problem as the researcher had to continually

persuade the research subjects to respond to the questions and so responses took a long time to come. Doing follow ups telephonically was disadvantageous and less fruitful because the research participants cut the conversation in the middle and advised the researcher to send the questions electronically. The next section is a presentation of the research design and justification of why I chose to use the two projects as case studies in interrogating the journalistic purposes and practices at the *Daily Dispatch*.

3.4 The research design

The research design involves a clear focus on the research question; the purposes of the study, what information most appropriately will answer specific research questions and which strategies are most effective for obtaining it (Le Compte and Preissle 1993: 30). This study was a two stage approach research design and it employed document analysis and in-depth semi structured interviewing which are part of the qualitative research tradition. The strength of using the two methods together lay in the fact that I could ask questions about what I had picked up from the qualitative/thematic analysis of the articles that made up the two projects. I could also make sense of what was being said in relation to the projects which became important in the later stages of the data presentation and analysis.

3.5 Case Studies

The case study, according to Simons, is an approach that can be constituted of different techniques, including document analysis and in-depth interviews which were deployed by this researcher (2009: 1). Case study refers to "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project in a 'real life' context whose primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic and to generate knowledge and/ or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action" (Simons 2009: 21). In order to acquire an in depth understanding of the two investigations under study, I did not remove them from their context and I also had to make use of another method, in depth interviewing in order to enhance the richness of the data (Yin 1993: 3).

Stake argues that "we do not study a case primarily to understand other cases but our primary obligation is to understand this one case" and that the cases we select are those which will maximise what we can learn (1995: 4). The great strength of case studies is that they provide vicarious experience in the form of full and thorough knowledge of the particular, in this case the journalistic practices of the editorial staff involved in the production of the *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* investigations (Stake 1995: 4). Elaborating on generalisation, Gomm et al. point out

that "the aim of case study research should be to capture cases in their uniqueness rather than to use them as a basis for wider generalisation" (2000: 3). Generalisation in qualitative research usually takes place through the development of a theory that not only makes sense of particular persons or situations studied but also shows how the same process in different situations can lead to different results (Maxwells 1992: 294).

3.6 Sampling for Qualitative Content /thematic Analysis

The study made use of non-random sampling strategy which is seen by Deacon et al. "as judgemental or purposive sampling which stresses the conscious and deliberate intentions of those who apply the procedures" (2007: 50). I chose to read all the 57 articles that made up the two projects in order to acquire a summary of the issues raised. Some articles were long and others very short (for example one to three paragraphs). The *Slumlords* investigation was made up of 44 articles. The *Broken Homes* investigation was made up of 13 stories in total and the same numbers of stories were published in both the print and online platforms of the paper from 29 July to 4 August 2009. Nineteen stories were published in the print version of the paper. All the 44 stories were published in the *Daily Dispatch* online. Fifteen stories were about the narratives of the slum dwellers and these provided the slum dwellers experiences most of which was similar. Nineteen of the stories provided in-depth information of the day to day circumstances of the investigation up to the time of living in one of the slums (Ntsaluba 2009pp-bbb). The other 10 stories were about the specific rooms inhabited by the slum dwellers and these were just three to five paragraphs in length. I then randomly selected articles to illustrate how the reporter framed his stories in order to bring out the moral argument and to show the victims and villains. Reading the articles also enabled me to identify who the main sources were. The articles were useful in providing examples when they were measured against the normative theories of public journalism and investigative journalism in Chapters five and six. There was thus no need to draw up a sampling frame as I had to make use of all the articles including visual materials for example images, video and interview clips that made up the two projects for the general qualitative content/thematic analysis and then pick up examples that were especially rich in order to back up my arguments. The next section looks at qualitative content/thematic analysis.

3.7 Qualitative content/thematic analysis

This method is a "move away from content analysis of an enumerative kind to one that is more qualitative, which focuses on the symbolic, discursive, framing or narrative dimensions of media texts" (Devereux 2007: 194). The same aspects make up key elements of investigative journalism theory as will be seen in the analysis chapter. Qualitative content analysis is one of numerous

research methods used to analyse text data. Text data might be in verbal, print, or electronic form and might have been obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, or print media such as articles, books, or manuals (Kondracki &Wellman, 2002).

This analysis provided a helpful precursor to interviewing key research subjects. This is because it helped me to formulate some of the questions that I asked my key research subjects. The documents helped to suggest issues that were crucial to explore in the case and to provide a context for interpretation of the interview. In analysing the documents I had to bear in mind that "all sources used in research have been produced in particular conditions, with certain aims in mind, and are indelibly shaped by the pressures, possibilities and temptations generated by the political and cultural contexts in which they are embedded" (Hodder 1994: 394), as seen in Chapter two.

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse 28 of the 57 stories that made up the two projects in order to get a full picture of how the stories were researched, what the stories were about, how they were framed and the sources quoted. 28 was the total number of *Broken Homes* (13) and *Slumlords* (15) stories about the experiences of the ordinary people following the breakdown shown above. The analysis focused on the "characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text" (Budd, Thorp, & Donohew, 1967; Lindkvist, 1981; McTavish & Pirro, 1990; Tesch, 1990). The goal of the qualitative content analysis was "to provide knowledge and understanding of how the stories were constituted" (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992: 314).

The qualitative content analysis required an initial focus on both the offline and online versions of the *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* projects which I downloaded from the *Daily Dispatch* database. I evaluated the stories against the normative theories of public and investigative journalism explained in the theoretical framework.

3.8 Sampling for in depth interviewing

For the in depth interviews, I purposively chose to interview the then editor of the *Daily Dispatch* Andrew Trench, the news editor Brett Horner, the deputy editor Bongani Siqoko and Gcina Ntsaluba, the journalist involved in the two projects. I also interviewed Sabelo Sikiti who did a follow up of *Slumlords* after Ntsaluba had left the paper. Jan Hennop, the online news editor was interviewed so that he could speak about the investigative journalism online. These people were chosen because they are the ones involved in the day to day running of the paper and more

specifically on the two research projects and I wanted them to reflect on their purposes, practices and outcome of the projects as stated in the research goals above. I did not interview the acting editor of the paper Charles Mohale because his placement at the paper was temporary. I also did not interview BCM and Tokyo Sexwale because the incorporation of their perspective would have gone beyond the scope of this analysis. Whatever comments were made in reference to them was based on the editorial staff of the *Daily Dispatch* and in light of the media, political and economic contexts within which the investigations were carried out.

3.9 Semi structured/in-depth interviewing

These types of interviews are qualitative in nature and they enable the researcher to acquire a "wealth of detail" (Wimmer and Dominick 1991). Deacon et al. argues that semi-structured interviews seek to promote an active and open-ended dialogue (1999: 65). Lindloff argues that these types of interviews are called "conversations with a purpose" as the interviewer takes part in conversation with the research subjects in order to understand a certain phenomena in an interactive, committed, open ended and empathic manner (1995).

In contrast to structured interviews which employ close-ended questions, this research used semi structured interviews because they offer a degree of flexibility in probing and in determining certain subjects in greater depth that structured interviews disallows (Fontana and Frey 1994). Semi-structured interviews however also require "carefully and fully wording of each question before the interview in order to guarantee that each interviewee is asked the same questions in the same way and the same order to ensure that similar issues are discussed with each interviewer" which is the procedure that I followed for the interview subjects (Fontana and Frey 1994).

By conducting these interviews I was hoping to get answers to the main questions that form my research goals. Interviewing them also gave the subjects the opportunity to critically reflect on their production practices and elaborate on why and how they covered the two projects and to find out how they could have been done differently. I drew up an interview guide that was informed by my main objectives and theoretical framework in Chapters one and two. However in line with Morgan (1998: 56) I did not rigidly follow the interview guide, but allowed myself to be flexible and follow up on issues as they arose. I was able to "retain control of the discussions I had with the subjects because of my interview guide that set out all the issues that had to be covered during the exchange" (Deacon et al. 1999: 65). The interview guide was very helpful to know what the main questions were and to identify those that I needed to probe further. As such I used a pen to tick the questions that I felt had been adequately answered and marked with crosses those I wanted to go back to.

I had several interviews with the research subjects as I had to converse with them on several occasions after I recognised that there were some issues that I needed to probe further after doing more reading and writing. Before my first interview I had a pilot study in order to test the amount of time that I would need for each interview and the soundness of the questions. My first interview was with the then editor of the *Daily Dispatch* Andrew Trench which I conducted in his *Daily Dispatch* office in order to hear what he had to say about the two projects. He was very welcoming and open. He was very relaxed and elaborated well on the questions that were asked. This is the strength of in depth interviewing as argued by Bryman that "the semi structured interviewing method is useful as it requires the researcher to show minimal guidance and allows "considerable latitude for interviewees to express themselves freely" (1988: 46).

At the beginning of the interview, I explained the purpose of the study and also made him aware that the interview was to be recorded and put the recorder on the table. Recording became useful as the researcher was able to directly transcribe and note any significant analytic features of the research participants (Deacon et al. 1999: 197). Recording the interview was also an advantage in that I acquired "richer, more sensitive insights into the views and activities of respondents" since all the nitty gritties were captured (Deacon et al. 2006: 78). At the time that I interviewed Trench, he was scheduled to leave in two days time for his new job and so I had to send follow up questions via email and also had a telephone interview with him.

Deacon et al. argues that "by letting respondents articulate their answers in their own terms, there is no danger of undermining rapport by imposing inappropriately restricted response frameworks (2006: 78). The interviews with Ntsaluba, the online editor Hennop and Sikiti and were also very fruitful, yielding rich detail about the two investigations. The reason for conducting a telephone interview was that it was the only quicker and cheaper method to get to talk to him compared to emailing questions as he had moved to his new job in Johannesburg and I could not have a face to face interview with him due to resource constraints. Emailing questions was done because the research subject himself felt more comfortable with emailed questions since he considered a telephone interview destructive to his work. However the disadvantage of this was that the process was slowed down as the responses came after a while and the researcher had to give him more time to respond due to his busy schedule.

3.10 Data Analysis

After the completion of the interviews, the next process was to do transcriptions and then the data analysis. I categorised my data into themes. Chapter four focuses on the origins and impetus of the *Slumlords* and *Broken Homes* investigations. Chapter five analyses the *Broken Homes*

investigations against the investigative journalism and public journalism theoretical frameworks seen in Chapters one and two. Chapter six analyses the *Slumlords* investigation in terms of both the investigative and public journalism theoretical frameworks. Chapter seven concludes the thesis by looking at some of the key similarities, themes and issues that emerged from the analysis of the two projects and also provides an overview of how the investigations could have been done differently. Doing the analysis was challenging as the information that I gathered from the qualitative content/thematic analysis and the interviews bled into each other. The information from the two methods was sometimes used concurrently which I continually evaluated against my theoretical frameworks.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the epistemological and methodological frameworks that informed this research. The case study approach was used and the methods that were employed were qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviewing. The two projects *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* were chosen and the researcher read all the articles in order to acquire a summary of what the stories were about, the framing and sources used. The researcher selected a few of the articles to illustrate her arguments. The interview subjects were also chosen purposively because they are the ones knowledgeable about the day to day running of the paper and were involved in the execution of the projects. The next chapter presents the origins of and impetus to the two projects.

Chapter 4

The impetus to and origins of *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords*

4 Introduction

This chapter is an in-depth exploration of the origins and purposes of the two projects *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords*. It explores some of the factors that led to the adoption of the *Community Dialogues* and *Dispatch Adventures* as editorial strategies. First, it considers the motivations and imagined purposes of the *Community Dialogues* and *Dispatch Adventures* from the viewpoint of the editorial leaders of the newspaper. It then interrogates the motivations expressed by the editorial leaders of the *Daily Dispatch* in the light of political economy critiques of public journalism encountered earlier. Were these projects driven by journalistic concerns to give voice to the poor and most marginalised communities or were they cynical marketing ploys to serve the circulation and profit interests of owners and advertisers, rather than citizens' democratic needs? Or, since all commercial journalism is a combination of goals and incentives, what combination of motives was at play in these projects? Even if the *Dispatch*'s efforts were motivated by 'higher purposes' than profit, to what extent does the structural logic of the commercial media system, within which the *Dispatch* is embedded, constrain journalistic agency?

4.1 Origins of the *Broken Homes* investigation

This section is concerned with explaining the impetus and origins of the *Dispatch Adventures*. The research reveals that the *Broken Homes* project came out of an editorial strategy, called the *Dispatch Adventures*. Teams of *Daily Dispatch* reporters got sponsorship from Mercedes Benz to travel around the Eastern Cape for one week each over 14 weeks (Trench interview 26/08/2010). The *Dispatch Adventures* helped the paper to build a repository of Eastern Cape travel and tourism stories but in explaining the purpose of the *Adventures*, Trench said that the idea was to "consciously broaden our reporters' appreciation of the area that we cover and to physically make contact with people in areas that are outside our daily beat coverage" (Interview 19/02/2010). The seven towns that the reporters visited on which *Broken Homes* was based included Burgersdorp "Living in cardboard boxes" (Ntsaluba 2009d); "Seymour: A holiday town for ghosts" (Ntsaluba 2009h); Venterstad: "Where homes are crumbling" (Ntsaluba 2009f); Sweetwaters: "Bitter unfinished business" (Ntsaluba 2009k). Tarkastad: "Town of empty promises" (Ntsaluba 2009i); Maclear: "A bureaucratic bungle" (Ntsaluba 2009l) and Ugie "Success story/Doing well (in *Dispatch* online" (Ntsaluba 2009m) and residents of these towns were visible in the stories as news makers as will be seen in the next chapter.

Elaborating on how the *Broken Homes* project came about, Trench said:

> In the course of doing the *Dispatch Adventures* there was a theme that cropped up where our teams where constantly coming across what seemed like abandoned housing projects... And some months after I happened to be out in the Seymour area and I had happened to go with my family, I noticed that there were vast tracks of homes and came back here and said, guys I think there is a big story for us to tell in terms of what's going on in terms of housing delivery and lack of it. That's how it started. We sent Ntsaluba to look out for a couple of months and try and get a deeper understanding of what the underlying story was, in terms of what was happening.(Interview 26/08/2010)

Ntsaluba and photographer Theo Jephta then "spent several months returning to many of these mushrooming ghost towns" (Daily Dispatch 2009a-m). This discovery laid the foundation for a very successful three month *Daily Dispatch* investigation into widespread dysfunction and mismanagement in the Eastern Cape housing programme called "*Broken Homes*: *How the Eastern Cape housing plan failed the poor*" (Ntsaluba 2009a). The investigation was published in a series of stories from 29 July to 4 August 2009 focusing on the uniqueness of problems in each of the seven towns (see Ntsaluba 2009d, f, i, h, k, l and m)

4.2 *Slumlords* origins

The *Slumlords* investigation was born out of a public journalism-inspired town hall meeting in an inner city area of East London called the *Southernwood Community Dialogue.* The *Community Dialogues* refer to a series of citizen-centric meetings held by the newspaper in 2009 where, according to former editor Trench, residents were invited "to come and air your views on the pressing challenges of your neighbourhoods and share your thoughts on how some of these things can be solved. We believe that we shouldn't leave politicians, or even newspapers to set the agenda for public discourse. The most important is your voice" (Trench 2009a).

Trench said he acquired an interest in public journalism because of the inspiration he got from the *Charlotte Observer*'s public journalism campaign in the US called *Taking Back Our Neighbourhoods* undertaken to solve crime:

> I was interested in public journalism and I was really struck by the example of the *Charlotte Observer* in the States, I think it was called *Taking Back Our Neighbourhoods* which did an amazing civic journalism campaign. It was an incredibly series of town hall meetings that the paper had with the community about tackling crime and it introduced this very dramatic program of change that resulted in drug houses being closed down and the paper also got attorneys to litigate on behalf of the community to get things done, main roads cleaned up, etc. It had a very dramatic effect on crime in that community. And obviously with crime as such an issue in South Africa, it was one of the things that we thought maybe we can connect or do that kind of journalism here with similar issues. (Interview 26/08/2010)

Trench also wrote in the *Dispatches From the Trench,* a column that he used to directly interact with readers, that he was "inspired" by the civic journalism movement "that had taken hold across the globe" and explicitly described the *Community Dialogues* as a form of civic journalism (2009a). Following Merritt (1995), Rosen (1999) and other public journalism advocate-theorists, Trench stated that one of the purposes of public journalism was to see "the *Daily Dispatch* change from being a passive observer and describer of events to being an active partner with its readers in helping to make things better" (Trench 2009a).

When Trench first wrote about the *Community Dialogues*, he saw them performing a number of core journalistic and civic purposes. They would:

- Help journalists connect to neighbourhoods and develop sources/ contacts;
- Give citizens a platform to speak out about their stories/ problems and express their needs;
- Allow journalists to share their agenda setting function with citizens and find compelling story ideas;
- Support public problem-solving efforts (Interview 26/10/2009).

According to Trench, in the *Community Dialogues*:

> We make sure the voices raised at these meetings are heard loud and clear by those in authority. We will also look to these meetings for ideas on how the paper can back community-based campaigns which will result in change for the better. My vision is that the *Dispatch* has a role as a builder of bridges in our community and as a catalyst for constructive discussion about our world. (Interview 26/10/2009)

One can see that Trench's ideas about the *Community Dialogues* are similar to some of the key ideas proposed by Haas in his public philosophy of public journalism (2007) where he advocates for the sharing of the news agenda between journalists and citizens and the promotion of problem solving by citizens. The next section is a critical explanation of the *Southernwood Community Dialogue.*

4.3 The Southernwood *Community Dialogue*

The *Southernwood Community Dialogue* was the third *Community Dialogue* held by the paper on 1 April 2009. Over 200 citizens turned up for the meeting, including representatives of the Buffalo City Municipality (BCM) and the South African Police Services (SAPS). This *Dialogue* was considered by the editorial leadership of the *Daily Dispatch* as more successful than the two earlier *Dialogues* in Beacon Bay and Nompumelelo because it prompted the Buffalo City Municipality to make some positive and measurable changes in the area. The research also established that the *Southernwood Community Dialogue* was important for informing the paper's news agenda. This is because the *Community Dialogues* have provided subaltern social groups

with the means to influence the *Daily Dispatch*, a commercial newspaper's agenda setting function. According to Trench:

> We were amazed at the vast number of stories that were generated, and the kind of insight that it gave us in terms of what we needed to do in terms of our news agenda. Initially we tried to approach this from a pure civic journalism and find solutions in these meetings and have people generate ideas and I think we have had limited success on it and what we discovered was that people wanted a platform to kind of vent and say their thoughts about things. So we kind of had to adjust but anyway it was very successful in terms of how it affected the focus of the paper and our own agenda. (Interview 26/08/2010)

In the *Southernwood Community Dialogue* residents raised complaints about the problem of increasing slum houses, overcrowding, tenants being overcharged and disrespected by slumlords, an increase in the establishment of illegal shebeens, the selling of drugs, noise, crime, grime, and the appalling state of the local parks which had become a haven for criminals and drunks (Ntsaluba 2009n-bb). Elaborating on how the *Slumlords* investigation was born and responding to the question of who set the news agenda in the *Slumlords* investigation, Trench said that citizens informed but did not set the news agenda. He stated that the paper knew about the situation but it was the *Southernwood Dialogue* that gave it impetus:

> We were aware of the problem of slumlords but what the Southernwood community meeting really brought home was the scale of it, the strong impact that it was having on people's lives. I mean, the effect of the meeting was to kind of move it up the ladder in terms of our priority of stories. It was just a theme that emerged very, very powerfully in that meeting. People talking about the problems of Southernwood slumlords and packing people into houses and causing all sorts of social problems. At the meeting I made a promise to the people that were there that we'll try and investigate to find out who these people are and do what we can do to expose them. It kind of started from there and as it turned out the strongest hook on it, just journalistically, was the story in King William's town which Ntsaluba did very well, living in the house and reporting the story from inside. Then there were elements of Southernwood we did expose, several people as well. But that's how it came about. It came directly out of a civic journalism meeting which I think is very great. It showed us what that kind of conversation can generate. It's a bread and butter issue but it also has potential to be really interesting journalistically. (Trench interview 26/08/2010)

In this regard the *Daily Dispatch* followed Nip who argues that one of the techniques that journalists use in order to allow citizens to set the news agenda is to hold town hall meetings (2008: 180). It also followed Haas' normative prescription, that if journalists, are to help create and sustain a public sphere to which all citizens have access, and in which all topics of concern to citizens can be articulated, deliberated and critiqued, journalists would need to engage citizens as active partners in the news making process (2007: 24). By allowing the public to inform their news agenda, the *Daily Dispatch* editorial staff did not cede but retained their autonomy by deciding, after the *Southernwood Community Dialogue*, which issues where the most important to follow up and which ones were not (and *Slumlords* and the cleaning up of the parks came out on

top of the list) (Lichtenberg 1999: 347). According to Trench, Southernwood's "extreme makeover" was remarkable because "it was the direct result of our readers speaking their minds. For once our readers' voices were heard and something was done. That surely counts as a success, as small as it may be, in our contemporary times of indifference" (Trench interview 26/10/2009).

In the *Daily Dispatch* report on the meeting the following day, Southernwood ward councillor Robert Muzzel complained that residents never attend community meetings in the area (Ndenze 2009a). Yet around 200 people turned out for the *Community Dialogue* and participated in a focused, solutions-oriented discussion. Trench commented on how quickly a consensus was built at this *Dialogue*:

> Southernwood was interesting because there you had a shared experience between black and white neighbours who are living in an inner city area with a lot of social problems. It was one meeting where people were agreeing with each other very quickly. There was far more of a kind of community activist element. It was also interestingly one of the few ones were local councillors were represented and the cops came. It was also the one *Dialogue* where I personally made a promise to people about the parks and the slumlords. You could see that there were these two things that if you could do something about them then it would make a big difference to the way people felt. (Interview 26/10/2009)

The *Slumlords* investigation was done over three months, in the last quarter of 2009 and was published in the off line and online versions of the paper, the *Dispatch* online (*Daily Dispatch* 2009n-bb). Ntsaluba went undercover in King Williams Town where he lived for one month, at 6 Pottinger Street, one of the houses that he wrote about. The outcome of the investigation is dealt with in depth in chapter six.

4.4 Motives behind the two investigations: Economic versus journalistic/civic imperatives

Were the staff of the *Daily Dispatch* driven by a sense of journalistic purpose to promote civic engagement or where they driven by commercial imperatives to widen the paper's circulation base and increase profit, or by a combination of both? In answering these questions, the section will also throw critical light on the roles that the paper understands itself to be playing.

When asked to elaborate where the two investigations fit in Christians et al (2009) four-part typology of press roles in a democracy, Trench said:

> Monitorial role is at the top of the pyramid for me. But there is much more texture in terms of what journalism is about. And those are the sorts of things we are experimenting with. It not just about shouting out loud. It is also about building the conversation. One of the things that has become important to me as an editor at the *Dispatch*, which I always speak to readers about, is that I really see the paper as a bridge-builder in the community.

> Two legs to it – the traditional watchdog role of journalism. But the other thing is to be located in your community and to have a relationship with your community. The values in that kind of journalism are different to the values on the other side. The idea is to have a material impact on the lives of our readers – not just describing a reality but to contribute to what that reality is as well. You can hold these two things together, but there can be a contradiction there too. Telling truth to power can be a very loud posturing kind of stand, and the other thing can be quite a gentle conversation. As one goes down the road of the one, the tone of the other changes a little bit too. (Interview 26/10/2009)

By going to investigate at the grassroots and giving ordinary people an opportunity to air their problems, the paper followed what Christians et al. recommend the media should do under the facilitative role, that is "engage readers in a way in which they actively participate" (2009: 158), which suggests that a link between the monitorial (investigative journalism) and facilitative roles (public journalism) exists at the paper. This shows that the roles not necessarily mutually exclusive (Christians et al. 2009: 32). For example, the monitorial role can be less adversarial than is ordinarily understood, sometimes even involving co-operation between journalists and the agencies they investigate (ibid).

Political economists have raised concerns about commercial newspapers' obsession with targeting the most affluent groups of society while neglecting marginalised communities (Golding and Murdock 2000; Curran and Gurevitch 1991, McChesney 2008). Why then did the *Daily Dispatch* invest their efforts and energy in the marginalised places covered by the *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* investigations, thus contradicting the notion that the commercial media is obsessed with affluent audiences? If the *Daily Dispatch* was driven by an attempt to widen the paper's circulation base, the fact that the paper visited poor rural areas and inner-city slums provides countervailing evidence because few residents in these areas can afford to buy the paper. This reveals that there was a sense of journalistic agency and purpose which provided the impetus for the *Dispatch Adventures* and *Community Dialogues*. It can be argued that the other motive to researching amongst the marginalised communities was to enhance the paper's credibility which might have had an economic dimension to it. While reaching out to marginalised communities, the *Daily Dispatch* is trying to remain competitive in the market place in light of the threat posed by the *Daily Sun*, a tabloid that is making waves countrywide in terms of high circulation figures, selling 500 000 copies a day which translates into 4,7 million regular readers (Wasserman 2010: x).

The investigations did not present a direct cost to the newspaper as Trench applied to the Taco Kuiper Fund for investigative journalism for assistance with the projects. The Taco Kuiper fund was created by the late millionaire publisher Taco Kuiper, who set up The Valley Trust shortly before his death. Kuiper was an investigative journalist and adopted an adversarial stance to

apartheid and the impact it had on black communities. The fund rewards and encourages investigative journalism in South Africa. Today the Wits Journalism Programme partners The Valley Trust to administer the Taco Kuiper Award and Fund.

The birth of the *Broken Homes* investigation also hinged on the sponsorship that the paper got from Mercedes Benz to embark on the *Dispatch Adventures* which granted the newspaper an opportunity to do some travel journalism, but also see what the "big stories were that needed to be told" (Trench interview 26/08/2010). The fact that the paper noticed that there was a housing problem and followed it up shows that it saw itself as having a social responsibility mandate as Trench said "to have a material impact on the lives of our readers and affect some kind of change in the community" (Trench interview 26/08/2010).

Curran argues that the investigative journalism role of the media is exaggerated as "many so-called 'news media' allocate only a small part of their content to public affairs and a tiny amount of disclosure of official wrong doing" (2005: 124). Investigative journalism thus becomes a rare phenomenon or a once off activity in the daily activities of many news organisations, the *Daily Dispatch* included. In spite of Trench's emphasis on the primacy of the monitorial role at his newspaper, the paper's resuscitation of investigative journalism is threatened by the commercial context within which it is embedded. At the end of 2008, the *Daily Dispatch* begun offering voluntary retrenchments to a number of editorial staff members as a result of declining advertising revenue associated with the deepening economic recession. The size of the newspaper also contracted, placing pressure on editorial space. While circulation held steady, the recession also negatively affected the affordability of the newspaper, especially in poorer communities. In October 2010, the proprietor *Avusa* decided to institute further cuts at the paper, which poses a threat to the paper's journalistic and civic mission. According to a report by Gill Moodie a former manager at the paper:

> And so it was with enormous disappointment that I heard that the country's most award-winning online journalism team - that of the Avusa-owned *Daily Dispatch* newspaper in East London has been dismantled because of a lack of revenue and little prospect of future revenue. What media expert Professor Anton Harber once called "the future" of news is now past tense. (Biz Community 2010[3])

She went on to explain how "the mood was one of dismay and anger as everyone watched their buddies in online face possible retrenchment" (Biz Community 2010). Jan Hennop, the online editor confirmed that he was going to be the only one responsible for the online work: "Our team consisted of five people, but we were recently restructured due to financial reasons and I am the

[3]Follow link on: http://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/15/53906.html

only one left" (Hennop interview 16/11/10). The retrenchments at the *Daily Dispatch* are part of a cost-cutting exercise that is affecting *Avusa*-owned newspapers. "*Sowetan's* 11 journalists and mid-level editors were recently given notices of retrenchment and the Mpumalanga and Vaal Triangle bureaus will be closed down, in what some staff members see as the beginning of the end of the daily" (The New Age 2009).

A *Sowetan* staff member who spoke on condition of anonymity said that "they are trying to kill the *Sowetan* in favour of *The Times*. They told us they are not making revenue, they need to cut costs. They say they have tried everything in their power but they are unable to make money," (The New Age 2009). The *Daily Dispatch* is under extreme pressure from economic factors, particularly the need to compete in a competitive media environment with tabloid titles like the *Daily Sun*. The fact that news media are businesses driven by profit could act as a constraint on journalistic agency and purpose. But, investigative journalism and public journalism can also be seen as having a potential commercial benefit to news organisations. For example, besides its journalistic and civic benefits, Trench said that the *Community Dialogues* could have had "commercial benefit in terms of building relationships with readers" which helped to "soften the impact" of what they were going through (Trench interview 26/10/2009). One key marketing strategy to have come directly out of the *Community Dialogues* was the idea of putting up posters in neighbourhoods relating to hyper local issues affecting that area. Trench explains:

> Sitting there as editor and hearing how worked up people are about issues in the neighbourhood it made sense for me to know that I have stories about those issues that are up on poles. Then they're more likely to buy the paper. The posters come directly out of the editorial from the *Community Dialogues*. (Interview 26/10/2009)

What then was the paper's overarching impetus for hosting the *Community Dialogues?* According to Trench:

> There was also the commercial imperative. Getting hit by the recession. When a marriage gets put under stress, which are the ones that survive – it's the ones where the relationship runs deep. It's also about protecting the paper's future commercially. It's not just about – I mean it's an interesting experiment in journalism and we've learnt a lot of stuff – but there are very tangible real world benefits to it. Our circulation has held pretty steady compared with other daily newspapers in the country. And suddenly our Saturday paper is blossoming. That's the consequence of the investment in the *Community Dialogues* and the investigative stuff that we've done, *Dispatches from the Trench*. So when times are hard people are making choices. We have to stay with this thing because it's not just a product we buy – there is an emotional and civic connection. It needs to be part of a localised newspaper. Because you actually have no excuse not to invest in that relationship very directly. There were a whole lot of things we had to protect, including our freedom as an institution and our circulation in a recession. And when you ask yourself how you do all those things you come back to the same answer – a strong

> relationship with your readers. I think it has worked because most of our readers have stayed the course with us. We are facing more competition in this area than ever before. The *Daily Sun* ... had become the biggest Eastern Cape newspaper. But, we've taken that back from them. A large part of that is because of this kind of stuff. Who do you choose: The paper that is part of your community and with you or the outsider from Johannesburg? Every day I see the benefits of the *Dialogues*. The strategy is really about relationships... Through all these strategies we're sending a very strong message to people that we are heavily invested in this relationship. We're not just serving the community – we are a part of it. (Interview 19/02/2010)

In summary, while decisions around initiating the *Dispatch Adventures* and *Community Dialogues* were shaped and structured by the concerns and logic of the commercial press, it is indisputable that both *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords* primarily served people of lower socio-economic status and other marginalised or minority groups not coveted by advertisers. The newspaper has dealt with 'unpopular' problems concerning low cost housing, making it difficult to accuse the *Daily Dispatch* of pandering to the wealthy and powerful segments that are supposedly most attractive to news management. This is not to say that the *Community Dialogues* are blind to, or insulated from, a concern with profit, but the testimony of the newspaper's editorial leadership would indicate that they are primarily guided by a concern for social responsibility and quality editorial in the public interest. While both investigative journalism and public journalism are 'reformist' rather than 'radical' – part of mainstream journalism and working in the capitalist marketplace within long-standing organisational, institutional and professional power structures – its location within the market does not necessarily prevent it from mounting some sort of challenge to the power relations of the mass media and the deep structures of dominance in the wider society.

4.5 Political Pressure

Another key reason for the paper holding the *Community Dialogues,* as explained by Trench, was because of political pressure in the run-up to the 2009 general elections. The *Daily Dispatch* sought to immunise itself from this pressure:

> One of the key strategic reasons we started investing in the *Community Dialogues* was that in the run-up to the last election we were taking a lot of pressure as a newspaper. We had senior politicians coming in here and essentially making threats against me and my staff and things like that. And I was thinking, well how do you get around this. Do you stand here and shout about or retreat. No. What you do is invest in your relationship with your constituency. 300 000 pretty influential people because they can afford to buy a newspaper. And these are people that we have a relationship with. The way to deal with that is to make sure the relationship is real and that it is completely invested and that people outside see that the connection is there. Because then as a media institution you are a hell of a lot stronger. And I can tell you that we haven't had any more of those okes knocking on our door! It's one way of dealing with the threat. (Interview 26/10/2009)

The adversarial relationship between the state and the media in the current context in South Africa is partly driven by accusations levelled against the media by the ANC who argue that the "commercial media exercise power without accountability" (Duncan 2010: 3). According to the ANC, the commercially driven media are "intrusive, embarrassing, irresponsible, disruptive, vulgar, brash and uninformed" (ANC 2002: 5). Through the *Community Dialogues*, the *Daily Dispatch* sought to build relationships of accountability and trust with particularly subaltern groups within East London. The *Community Dialogues* can thus be seen to be a strategic move providing a buffer zone against government criticism. This is because the *Community Dialogues* have provided subaltern social groups with the means to influence the commercial media's agenda setting function, which represents a more direct form of media accountability that goes well beyond weak, indirect forms of voluntary self-regulation usually proffered by the South African media industry. In contrast to the ANC Government's formulation that the state should be the repository of the will of the people understood as the 'national interest' (see Duncan 2003), the *Daily Dispatch* assumes that *'the people'* are the ultimate repository of the will of the people and accordingly set out to discover 'public interest' empirically by engaging directly with these publics through the *Community Dialogues*.

Following Wasserman and de Beer, the *Daily Dispatch*'s *Community Dialogues* can be evaluated as a "foundation of their professional role in which they act as a defender of the public's interest in the face of possible abuse of government power" and act as the fourth estate when they investigate issues raised by citizens in these *Community Dialogues* (2005: 45). Another strong impetus for the *Community Dialogues* was that since mid-2009 the Buffalo City Municipality had been wracked by political in-fighting, which had brought local government in the city "to the brink of financial and administrative chaos" (Piliso 2010: 16). In the midst of a visible breakdown in basic service delivery, the *Community Dialogues* can be seen to have came into the vacuum to provide a vertical bridge between those elements in local government still committed to public service and an increasingly wound up citizenry. According to former *Daily Dispatch* council reporter Babalo Ndenze the in-fighting between two powerful ANC factions in the province was "killing service delivery because no decisions were being taken at council meetings" (2009a). Deputy Editor Bongani Siqoko confirms this prognosis with this description of a BCM council meeting:

> I went to city hall and sat in the gallery and couldn't believe it. How we decided to give these guys a mandate to run our city escapes me... They can't agree on how a meeting should be structured – whether it is a continuation of the last meeting or not. They couldn't agree on those basic issues (Interview 18/02/2010).

At the same time, as we saw in Chapter one, civic structures like ward committees, designed to represent the interests of all citizens in residential areas, have become highly 'politicised':

> You go to a ward committee and all they talk about is the ANC's plan for this area, the ANC's election manifesto says this and all that. If I'm not a member of the ruling party, in whose interests is this? They do not discuss issues that actually affect the local community. This is a structure that is supposed to be helping all of us as the community. There was a time when we knew what was happening in our areas and we wanted to be part of SGB [School Governing Body] structures, and the community safety forums [CPFs]. But, the CPFs were supposed to be about me and you sitting with the community safety officer, and the police commissioner. We would together devise a crime prevention plan for our area. But the only thing that is discussed at CPF meetings is party politics. (Siqoko interview 18/02/2010)

Siqoko also laments the weakness of watchdog bodies in South Africa. He says he cannot phone the anti-corruption unit in the Office of the Premier of the Eastern Cape because "somebody I know is going to respond there" and he will not be protected as a whistleblower (Siqoko, interview 18/02/2010). In light of the above, it was unsurprising that many citizens displayed such overwhelming enthusiasm to participate in the *Community Dialogues*, as they may have represented the only viable public sphere able to withstand pressure from political society. The next chapter is a critical evaluation of the two investigations.

Chapter 5

Analysing the *Broken Homes* project

5. Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the research processes, media outputs and the outcome of the *Broken Homes* project. I evaluate the strategies that the paper employed to build the moral argument in order to evoke public indignation. Here I analyse issues such as framing, sourcing and the concept of primary definition, the use of language and construction of narrative, as well as the journalistic skills and aptitudes exhibited in the investigation. The investigation will also be critically evaluated against the classic mobilisation model. The relative success of this investigation is explored from the viewpoints of the editorial staff of the *Daily Dispatch* and in the light of the political, economic and media contexts within which it took place.

5.1 The *Broken Homes* investigation: Overview and analysis

Broken Homes was made up of 13 stories, which were published in both the print and online platforms of the paper. The stories were of varying lengths ranging from 13 to 21 paragraphs and were organised into seven different towns namely Burgersdorp, Tarkastad, Venterstad, Seymour, Sweetwaters, Maclear and Ugie all in the Eastern Cape Province (Ntsaluba 2009a-m). Accompanying the stories were images and video clips that reflected the housing conditions in these areas. Ugie was different from the other six towns: houses were built properly and the lives of the ordinary people were far better compared to the other six towns, partly attributed to the successful timber projects in the area. According to Ntsaluba:

> In Ugie, things aren't going too badly at all. Homes were neatly lined up in rows, one behind the other, and the quality was not bad at all. We could see that some people had extended their houses to make them bigger with a combined number of 2,120 homes. All In all, Ugie painted the best picture of all the towns we have travelled to. (2009m)

The use of images and videos of the deserted broken homes and shacks for the other six towns in the online platform of the paper provides 'irrefutable evidence' of the scale of the housing problem (Dispatch online 2009). The affected citizens of the different towns made up the main sources quoted in the stories. The paper also made use of interactive maps of the RDP housing projects for all the towns which allow the reader to click on a place and view the houses, and move around the map zooming in and out of the area (Dispatch online 2009). There is a "leave a reply" section under the stories online in which readers include their names and email addresses and submit comments to the paper. The paper also included an interview clip with the Housing MEC, Nombulelo Mabandla. Statistics, in the form of charts and graphs, figures showing the

costs of building the houses and progress reports were also included in the online package. According to Trench:

> What we were trying to do in that online project, was to try and use the capacity of online to add new dimensions of understanding to the story. Using things like maps or charts or video ... as three dimensional opportunities to tell the story. Every multimedia online element that we add, must also add a new depth of understanding for the reader that you can't achieve in print. Otherwise it's pointless to take everything that you did in print and put it online and put some pretty pictures on it. This doesn't really add too much value in terms of the mission of making readers understand more about what you are trying to say. (Interview 26/08/2010)

Burgersdorp stories narrate the "terrible everyday living conditions of people living in cardboard houses" (Ntsaluba 2009d). There are also other stories about residents who complained that they had been asked by the Buffalo City Municipality to clean the rubble from the streets for free (ibid). In Tarkastad the houses built under the RDP scheme were vandalised and stood unoccupied (Ntsaluba 2009h). "Some people ended up in the wrong houses while others just forced their way in because of a lack of a clear registration system from the municipality" (Ntsaluba 2009h). Ntsaluba refers to it as a "ghost town" because of such conditions (ibid). Sweetwaters provides an example of houses which were left unfinished, and there was no water or electricity (Ntsaluba 2009i). In Seymour, "the unfinished houses were ransacked by criminals" and according to Ntsaluba, "the failed RDP project became a criminals' hideout" (Ntsaluba 2009g). Out of 461 RDP homes built in the town, 432 stood empty and the area was devoid of people most of who had gone to other places to look for jobs. The community also had no running water, sewerage pipes or toilets and they fetched water from the same tank (Ntsaluba 2009g). In Venterstad, the contractor left the houses unfinished and the houses were unoccupied, while in Maclear there were 250 houses but of these 77 stood empty. According to Ntsaluba, "they are so badly put together that nobody can live in them and those that remained unoccupied have been stripped off by criminals" (Ntsaluba 2009k).

According to Ntsaluba, housing MEC, Nombulelo Mabandla admitted that her department had failed to deliver homes to the poor despite spending more than R1 billion in the past three years. She says that there was poor management by municipal housing officials from municipalities responsible for allocating houses to beneficiaries (Ntsaluba 2009c). However she goes on to deflect the blame onto the "inexperienced contractors":

> Structural defects in these houses are due to shoddy workmanship by our contractors and more especially from emerging contractors. That is why we have to plan to train our emerging contractors under the Emerging Contractor Development Programme to make sure this does not happen again. (Ntsaluba 2009c)

It is clear in the comments made in the story headlined "Government won't repeat mistakes" that Mabandla was fully aware of the problems facing her department (Ntsaluba 2009c). This is in contrast to statements made by Chris Vick, the spokesperson for the Minister of Human Settlements Tokyo Sexwale, who said that the ministry did not know about the problem in the Eastern Cape. This suggests a disconnect and poor communication between national and provincial governments. Ntsaluba also related that Vick had later told him the investigation was "the only tangible research they'd got in South Africa in terms of housing" (Ntsaluba interview 19/2/2010) an alarming revelation given the enormous resources at the state's disposal to commission research on one of its top political priorities. A public letter from Vick, said:

> I'd like to put it on record our appreciation of the vital role that the *Daily Dispatch* has played in highlighting the plight of the poor and in particular in exposing problems with housing service delivery. It's no secret within our team that it was your *Broken Homes* report that first helped us as newcomers to this portfolio to understand the scale of the problem in the Eastern Cape. (Daily Dispatch 2009)

"So we got a national policy intervention, new programmes – I didn't expect them to go to that extent, I really didn't" (Ntsaluba, interview 19/02/2010). The next section looks at the techniques, framing, narrative strategies, skills and aptitudes exhibited by Ntsaluba in doing the investigation.

5.2 *Analysing Broken Homes* against the normative prescription of investigative journalism

The story of *Broken Homes* tells a narrative of "victims, villains and an institution in disarray" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 31). The Eastern Cape Housing Department is the 'institution in disarray' which failed to deliver proper houses in six of the seven towns covered by the investigation. When Ntsaluba demonstrated that Ugie was a success story if compared to other towns, he followed Kovach and Rosenstiel who argue that investigative journalists need to provide examples of institutions that are doing well and the ones that are not so that the public has a basis of judging the good from the bad (2001: 2). The stories take a human interest focus as Ntsaluba was involved in a process of "building morally-charged tales of suffering in order to engage public conscience" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 13). To engage public conscience, journalists must reveal the violation not to be just "technically wrong" but "terribly wrong", and through narrative, the investigative reporter shows his/her readers "what it would be like if it happened to them: terror, pain, humiliation and abandonment" which makes framing core to any investigative journalism story (Ettema and Glasser 1989: 15). According to Ntsaluba residents are living in "crumbling" houses, the conditions are "unbearable" and the "papery walls offer hardly any relief from the devastating winter cold" (Ntsaluba 2009f). As a result, residents of these six towns complained about the Eastern Cape Housing Department

(Ntsaluba 2009a-m). For example in Burgersdorp in a story headlined "Teen killed as RDP home collapses on him" (named "A mother's pain" in the *Dispatch online* video), Ntsaluba presents a woman whose 13-year-old boy was killed when one of the walls of a poorly built RDP home fell on him (Ntsaluba 2009e). To evoke emotions of sympathy, Ntsaluba describes how the teenager's body was "trapped under the rubble". According to paramedics the teenager had "been killed instantly by a big chunk of a wall that landed on his head" due to shoddy work by the contractors (Ntsaluba 2009e). The story also reveals poor administration on the part of the Eastern Cape Housing department which according to Ntsaluba "failed to employ contractors qualified to build quality houses" (2009f).

The most powerful story in terms of revealing the plight of the shack dwellers, who in the stories are portrayed as helpless victims who have been failed by the government, is about the conditions in Burgersdorp headlined "*Residents freeze waiting for homes to be rebuilt*" (Ntsaluba 2009d). In the story, Ntsaluba narrates how "inferior construction" forced residents out of their homes and they now lived in cardboard boxes provided to them by the municipality. This is because the houses were left unfinished and had fallen down. To add insult to injury, the municipality asked these cardboard house dwellers to clean up the rubble (Ntsaluba 2009d). The moral discourse of dissatisfaction and suffering is made compelling when Ntsaluba quotes two pensioners, Loki Makeleni and Ngqukuse Nonxasa, who have been living in cardboard houses while their houses were being built. These 'ordinary citizens', acted as the primary definers of the investigation when Ntsaluba foregrounded their "unbearable and tough living conditions" (2009f). "If they left water in a bucket overnight it froze and they can't make a fire inside it because it will burn down the 'house'" (2009d). According to Ntsaluba, Makeleni has a chest problem and struggles to breathe properly:

> It's hard, especially for old people like us who are always sick and need money to go to the clinic" The government doesn't care about people who live here. We're going to die in these houses. I'm just waiting for my coffin right now. We wake up with aching bodies all the time and we don't sleep properly. This 'house' is too cold and we can freeze and die here anytime. (Ntsaluba 2009d)

By relying on ordinary citizens to set the agenda, it can be argued that Ntsaluba challenged Hall et al.'s theory of primary definition in which powerful institutions, experts and government officials are positioned at the top of "a hierarchy of credibility and journalists take the frameworks for understanding events offered by representatives of such institutions as a starting point for their reports and thus become the primary definers of topics" (1978: 58). By featuring "real players" (the affected citizens) in his stories, Ntsaluba was able to

make his investigation "come alive" in order to evoke sympathy and arouse public indignation (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 31). It can also be argued following Protess et al. that he "was advocating for policy reforms in housing" (1991: 18).

In Tarkastad, where "some people ended up in the wrong houses others just forced their way into houses that did not belong to them", Ntsaluba shows that "empty homes outnumber those occupied and vandals had stripped a number of homes bare, adding to the sense of desolation and decay" (Ntsaluba 2009i). What Ntsaluba was trying to do through his repertoire of examples, images, understandings and actions was to say that there was something important going on (problems in housing) that we must think about and think about hard (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 21). The use of the terms "desolation" and "decay" are meant to emphasise that there was no life in Tarkastad.

"After having done the investigation for three months and gathered enough information the next step was for me to write. I knew that I wanted to tell people about lack of delivery in housing and the impact it had on the lives of the poor in the Eastern Cape" (Ntsaluba interview 26/10/10). In this regard, Ntsaluba exhibited the investigative journalistic qualities of commitment and having purpose in order to reveal the suffering of ordinary citizens and "failure of government to provide proper housing for the poor" (Ntsaluba 2009a-m). Investigative journalist and Pulitzer prize winner, William Gaines, states that "the main thing in writing an investigative story is not to suddenly lead the reader down some side street but to have a purpose from the beginning of the story to the end" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 57).

Investigative journalists according to Ettema and Glasser always struggle with questions of whether their hard work produces a reason that is "good enough", which refers to sufficiency of the evidence and the credibility of their claims (1998: 13). Ntsaluba's provision of evidence can be deemed as 'good enough' as it attracted action from the Ministry of Human Settlements. Investigative reporter Bill Dedman says that "the investigative reporter is driven by the need to get to the bottom of things and not to merely expose but to fully publicise instances of suffering and injustice" which Ntsaluba was able to do (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 200).

There is a similarity in the subject of human rights violation in *Broken Homes* to *Boston Globe* investigative journalist and Pulitzer prize winner Jonathan Kaufman's own experience who according to Ettema and Glasser "achieved professional prominence with stories about people whose rights were being trodden upon" (1998: 6). Reflecting on his practice he asks that "if we are not going to write about homeless and poor people and people discriminated against, who

will?" (1998: 6). Ntsaluba reflected the same sentiment when he said that his role as an investigative journalist gave him the opportunity "to expose government malpractices, human rights abuses through giving voice to the marginalised (Ntsaluba interview 21/09/10). Speaking about the importance of investigative journalism he said:

> It's the justice that it does to the story. I don't believe in spending a day or two researching a story and then publishing after that. Some stories need a lot of attention and a lot of detail to it. So that's what I try to get to with investigative journalism, the fact that you can get to know your subjects or topic so well after spending time researching it. For me it's a deeper sense of what journalism is about where you spend time investigating and researching what you want to write about. It's not about publishing; the moment you think you have got a story. There is always an issue that you can look deeper into. (Interview 27/09/2010)

Trench also saw an advantage in the fact that investigative journalism helped to tell the stories more thoroughly:

> Well I think my primary interest is that the investigative style allows us to tell the story better because you spend time immersing yourself in a subject, and understanding the complexity of something. At the end you have more information that is of much higher value than in the sort of day to day journalism and tradition. And it also sells into the idea of the paper affecting some kind of change. I think that stories that are deeply researched and properly told have a longer power and a lot more capacity to make things happen, so that's where it comes from. It tells the story thoroughly. (Interview 26/08/2010)

The notion of objectivity in investigative journalism is important as journalists' guiding philosophy but there is a "paradox since investigative journalists are always accomplishing moral work when they show that transgressions are in fact transgressions" (Ettema and Glasser 1989: 2). In order to engage the public conscience, journalists through narratives of victimhood and villainy must reveal the violation not to be just "technically wrong" but "terribly wrong", which involves the use of irony and finding coherence and meaning in the story (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 13). It can be argued that in the *Broken Homes* project, Ntsaluba accomplished moral work. However there is a contradiction when Ntsaluba sees the investigation as "objective social knowledge, facts unmediated by human interests or values" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 7). According to Ntsaluba:

> What we documented in the investigations was objective. The interviews and the videos with the affected people spoke about what they were going through. There was no way I could take sides because the statistics spoke for themselves and the people spoke about their suffering. The department provided us with various statistics relating to backlogs in housing units, numbers of houses that had to be fixed because of poor construction. As a journalist I had to tell the story without getting involved. That is our job at the end of the day and we tell the story and leave our personal baggage aside. (Interview 13/01/11)

Ettema and Glasser argue that:

> The objectivity of daily journalism, for example, may be reducible to a set of rule-lead with an important fact, quote official sources, and so on but this text bookish objectivity is insufficient for the investigative reporter who is, as one said, "trying to find out what's true". The investigative reporter must then, learn to creatively sustain a conversation with the situation. The mastery of the journalistic craft is not a matter of rule bound objectivity but of mature subjectivity (1998: 22-23).

Christians et al. argue that to equate the concept of objectivity with the monitorial role (investigative journalism) is too restricted a view because media information has an interface with other, less neutral activities and perspectives (2009: 142). This is because journalistic professional practices such as selection, interpretation (direct or implied) "opens the door to subjectivity" (Christians et al. 2009: 142). Ettema and Glasser say that "it is hard to gather and publish information without making value judgements or applying criteria of relevance that have no objective bias" (ibid). Investigative journalism can hardly be accomplished without personal engagement and without deploying some clear value judgements, even if not advocating for them (1998: 22-23). While Ntsaluba like other mainstream journalists boasted about his concern and adherence to objectivity, his subjectivity in the *Broken Homes* investigation was seen through his decision to have ordinary citizens speaking more prominently than government officials in the stories. He positioned himself on the side of these citizens. He also took an angle of government failing to deliver proper houses in the Eastern Cape and used emotive language in framing his stories in order to arouse moral indignation.

Ntsaluba was rigorous and demonstrated his interviewing skills (de Burgh 2000; Ettema and Glasser 1998). He also had to go through records as additional information to show how the funds set aside for the project were spent. This is in direct contrast with mainstream journalists who are constrained by the daily deadline. Investigative journalists go out of their way to dig deep into issues and carry out as many interviews as possible in order to get more information (McChesney 2008: 132).

5. 3 Outcome of *Broken Homes*

This section is concerned with evaluating the outcome of the *Broken Homes* investigation against the mobilisation model (1991: 15). After the publication of *Broken Homes*, the Minister of Human Settlements, Tokyo Sexwale, congratulated the *Daily Dispatch* for exposing the problem of housing in the Eastern Cape. Three major housing contractors were fired and there is pending litigation against dozens more, a process which continues today (Daily Dispatch 2009). According to Ettema and Glasser, the investigative reporter is driven by a desire to see that those who cause suffering and injustice are held publicly accountable (1998: 31). There is evidence of commitment by government officials to holding the emerging contractors into account. After the

Broken Homes exposé, some of the contractors were fired and a program started to train emerging contractors (Ntsaluba 2009c). However, if the Housing Department had closely monitored the work of the emerging contractors in the first place, they would not have allowed "shoddy houses" to be built. This means that the government itself is largely to blame (Ntsaluba 2009c). Moreover, the housing issue in South Africa is a deep structural problem and points to a lack of effective administration of the RDP scheme (Pillay 2010). The failure of various governments to provide proper adequate housing in post-apartheid South Africa was used by Jacob Zuma to come into power, but critics point out how the Zuma government is failing to address the housing backlog (see reports by PSAM). Following Shah, a development journalism approach to housing by the *Daily Dispatch* is critical for providing constructive criticism of government housing policy and to inform informed readers how the development process is affecting them, and to highlight local self-help projects" (1996: 143).

In relation to the response of both provincial and national government, Ntsaluba said that the MEC for Housing Nombulelo Mabandla "gave us good feedback and admitted that there were problems" (Ntsaluba interview 19/02/2010). After the publication of the story, Sexwale met with all nine national housing MECs, and then with Eastern Cape municipal managers and mayors. Then he directed the parliamentary portfolio committee on Human Settlements to visit the Eastern Cape to do their own assessment of some of the places Ntsaluba had written about and personally came down to view the houses that Ntsaluba had written about (Daily Dispatch 2009). More recently in a media statement, Sexwale warned that provincial housing departments which failed to meet their targets would have their budgetary allocations taken away (Daily Dispatch 2010a).

Ntsaluba's analysis of this unprecedented government response to a *Daily Dispatch* investigation was that the story had presented Sexwale with "an opportunity to show his mettle" and "make some noise" in the Eastern Cape (Ntsaluba, interview 19/02/2010). On top of that, it can also be argued that as someone who had been appointed Human Settlements Minister on 10 May 2009, which is the time that the *Daily Dispatch* began its research into the housing situation in the Eastern Cape, Sexwale wanted to make a name for himself. Helping his cause was the fact that the paper did not directly implicate him in the problem since the investigation was published two months after his appointment.

Apart from the response that the project got from national housing, *Broken Homes* won the Mondi Shanduka award in 2010 for South Africa's story of the year. Ettema and Glasser make the contention that "some argue that prizes are a matter of politics and luck – that may be so, but

the stories that win them are not. The stories are a matter of mastery and journalistic craft and a key to mastery is the framing of the problem in a way that renders its complexities and uncertainties understandable and manageable" (1998: 20). The *Mondi Shanduka* awards judges' comments with regards to *Broken Homes* were that the investigation was chosen for the award because of its focus on a subject of lack of delivery in South Africa and how this lack of delivery had resulted in the suffering of the shack dwellers. The emphasis on the suffering of ordinary people together with the action that the investigation attracted from the government were some of the key factors contributing to *Broken Homes'* success with the judges.

> The South African story of the year was certainly about delivery – or as represented by this story, non delivery. Gcina Ntsaluba's investigation into low cost housing construction tenders in the Eastern Cape used the best of traditional journalistic methods to investigate at firsthand the delivery of substandard housing and its impact on communities. Ntsaluba documented a litany of dodgy deals. The human side was brought home with the revelation that one shoddy-built home had collapsed and killed a 13 year old. In bringing the voices of often marginalised rural citizens to mainstream newspapers, Ntsaluba produced a story that had impact beyond the borders of the Eastern Cape. It led to intervention by the Minister of Human Settlements and a visit from the Parliament's Housing Portfolio Committee. Through a local story, this coverage also speaks volumes for the nation at large as it is about an issue that is very close to people's needs. The articles were well researched and told in a comprehensive and compelling manner. To understand many of the dynamics in South Africa in 2009, and not least the scores of service delivery protests, one need look no further than this story as a cameo of a national crisis. (Mondi Shanduka 2010a)

The next section is concerned with evaluating the *Broken Homes* investigation against the mobilisation model of investigative journalism by Protess et al (1991).

5.4 The applicability of the mobilisation model to *Broken Homes*

The *Broken Homes* investigation which, according to the editorial staff of the *Daily Dispatch* was a 'success', followed Step one of the mobilisation model, which states that vigilant journalists use their innovative methods to bring wrong doing to attention. It also mirrored Step three of the model, which states that government responds by taking corrective action. However, there was very little reader response (Ntsaluba interview 26/10/2009) and no overt pressure was brought to bear on politicians by the public for housing reform. The story thus did not follow Step two of the mobilisation model which says that exposés "alter public opinion and result in citizens putting pressure on government for reforms" (Protess et al 1991: 18). To explain the lack of reader response, Waisbord argues that "some stories have a strong impact, triggering congressional investigations and public mobilisation; other exposés barely register on the public radar" (ibid). She goes on to say that lack of active engagement in civic action to combat abuses disclosed by news reports does not mean that citizens condone corruption, but may be a reflection of political

disenchantment and apathy (Waisbord 2000: xviii). In the case of *Broken Homes*, it can be argued that there was little public response because the affected were poor people who stay in these rural areas are far away from East London where the majority of the readers are based (Ntsaluba interview 26/10/2009). The problem of citizen apathy is true of South African subaltern civil society which according to Heller is "disconnected from the state and political society and has more or less been sidelined from the political process in South Africa" (2009: 138).

The editor Trench was proud that government, at national level, despite public apathy was able to take action after its publication. He said:

> Yes, it was success in the sense that there has definitely been some real action and response. What was stunning to me was the reaction of the Human Settlements Department. It was the first time that we had done an investigation that was very critical of government policy where we went round and indicated and vilified it. Tokyo got in touch with us and actually said we helped him to understand what they needed to do in terms of sorting out housing. There has been also been a big crackdown on crooked contractors and lawsuits and things like that. There has been an active campaign to try and deal with people that are responsible for the mess that we discovered and try and fix it and we have done a number of stories since that time and some of the areas had interventions. I think it was successful to me because it had results. It wasn't just people reading the story, and getting shocked by it and putting the paper to one side and thinking that nothing would happen. Our newspaper wasn't going to solve the problems of housing in South Africa, but it is good for us to see that there was some improvement on it. (Trench interview 26/08/2010)

The lack of public mobilisation around *Broken Homes* tallies with Protess et al's (1991: 19) revision of the mobilisation model of investigative journalism. Protess et al argue that "if, as suggested by the mobilisation model, the public is a necessary link between the media and policy changes, then that link is often weak and unreliable" (1991: 19). They also argue that while investigative journalists and officials would appear to be natural adversaries, their relationships may be more complex, less adversarial – than is usually understood. The *Daily Dispatch* tried to be adversarial in the *Broken Homes* investigation by exposing Eastern Cape Housing Department's deficiencies, but surprisingly (to them) they got plaudits from National Government (who were not directly implicated in the investigation). This supports Merrill's view that "the relationship between the media and the government is freewheeling and changing that it cannot be explained in a monolithic way as entirely adversarial or friendly" and is dependent on a number of factors (1996: 20).

Policy making changes often occur regardless of the public's reaction and may be triggered by other factors. As stated earlier, a new national minister Sexwale out to make a name for himself took advantage of the *Daily Dispatch*'s investigation which did not implicate him to be part of the problem. The investigation was done for three months and published in July and Sexwale was

new in the office of Human Settlements having been appointed in May of the same year. Curran is right, in this context, when he points out that the "initiative for change, for example policy reforms usually comes from within the structure of power" (political society) rather than from civil society" especially in a state with weak subaltern civil society groups (2005: 134). There might thus have been a more 'collaborative' agenda building process (between journalists and officials) in this public policy arena (development journalism), in this case, again contradicting the classic mobilisation model (Protess et al. 1991: 19). While the approach of the national housing department was less adversarial it was not collaborative either, in the terms that the framework of Christians et al (2009) suggests collaboration to encompass. This begs the question: could/should the *Daily Dispatch* have taken advantage of the positive reaction of the housing ministry and entered into a 'normative agreement' in order to work as partners in dealing with this problem? By signing a normative agreement the *Daily Dispatch* could have put pressure on the Housing Department to facilitate further reforms in housing for public benefit. The *Daily Dispatch* has in previous campaigns tried to create a partnership with BCM and have failed. According to Trench:

> We sent the BCM very positive signals that we were very keen to get involved with them. And it fizzled to nothing. I suspect that once the political battles in the city are settled, and if a particular camp prevails. There have been very strong overtures to the paper which has a political self interest involved from politicians partly to gain our support for their own ends. (Interview 26/10/2009)

Christians et al argue that "collaboration through acceptance" is the only type that deals specifically and exclusively with merits of a collaborative role for journalism (2009: 199). They argue that journalists only enter into "*fully normative* agreements to collaborate after taking into account *all that needs to be known* about the *particular arrangements*" (2009: 200 emphasis in the original). They also consider "the *outcomes of collaboration*, including an assessment of the consequences of the cooperation for the larger community and judge the collaborative role to be correct and proper" (ibid). The next section analyses the *Broken Homes* investigation against public journalism theory.

5.5 *Broken Homes* and public journalism

As seen in chapter 4, *Broken Homes* was born out of an editorial strategy, called the *Dispatch Adventures* in which teams of *Daily Dispatch* reporters drove out to the Eastern Cape to see what the issues were and to talk to the ordinary people. The *Dispatch Adventures* were not described as public journalism by the editorial staff of the *Daily Dispatch* but had resonance with public journalism's bottom up strategies of researching and giving voice to the ordinary and marginalised groups in society shown when Ntsaluba "featured more real people in his stories

and covering the stories in a way that facilitates public understanding" (Nip 2008: 180). The practice of "featuring more real people" in his stories and covering the stories "in a way that facilitates public understanding" was exemplified by Ntsaluba's focus on the 'issue' of broken homes in which he framed the story along the "master narrative" of lack of progress in housing" and the suffering of shack dwellers (Charity 1995: 86). Ntsaluba was able to ask residents "questions that opened up the conversation as they related their suffering to him at their own pace" (Nip 2008: 180). In the *Broken Homes* series, residents were cited more prominently in the news as seen in the previous section. By going to the ordinary people, who in turn informed the paper's news agenda, the *Daily Dispatch* conformed to two key practices by Nip of "allowing citizens to influence the newspaper's agenda in addition to giving ordinary people a voice" (ibid). It can also be argued that the *Daily Dispatch* followed Haas who argues that journalists should "engage citizens as active partners in the news making process" (2007: 32). In *Broken Homes*, citizens were active news makers in that they were directly quoted as primary sources in the stories (see Ntsaluba 2009a-m).

Public journalism advocates for the promotion and improvement, and not merely reporting on or complaining about public or civic life (Glasser et al 1998: 204). Improvements occurred but the paper undermined its potentially facilitative role by failing to engage publics in face to face dialogue or deliberation around how they wanted the problem of housing to be solved. Citizens were not directly engaged in problem solving (Haas 2007: 40; Nip 2008: 180). In order to promote democratic pluralism, citizens are taken seriously in clarifying and resolving public problems which was not the case in the *Broken Homes* investigation (Christians et al 2009: 159). One can thus argue that *Broken Homes* led to a process of government problem solving rather than public problem solving. As we have seen South Africa's subaltern civil society remains highly constricted along both the 'horizontal' (among civil society groups themselves) and 'vertical' axes (between civil society and the state) of democratic deepening (Heller 2009: 131). Heller argues that local government is absent or weak in much of the developing world and there are very few points of contact with the state for ordinary citizens which leaves little room for the practise of effective citizenship (2009: 128-132) resulting in a kind of problem solving that is driven by political society. According to the facilitative role (public journalism) journalists and editors, in this case, those of the *Daily Dispatch* should cultivate a platform for deliberation between the government and the publics in dealing with the housing problem. The next section analyses the *Broken Homes* investigation against tabloid journalism theory.

5.6 *Broken Homes* and tabloid journalism

The bottom-up strategy of researching and giving voice to the ordinary people on the ground gives the *Broken Homes* investigation some resonance with the tabloid journalism' strategy of going to research among the ordinary poor people. This supports the view by Wasserman about tabloids being popular amongst their readers because they tell stories that tally with the narrative of the people's daily lives (2010: ix). In the investigation, Ntsaluba chose to follow the narrative of the poor homeless people and advanced an argument of suffering and government negligence to the cause of the ordinary people. In this case, it can be argued that the *Daily Dispatch* saw itself as having a relationship with the poor people in the areas that the investigation focused on (Wasserman 2010: 54) thereby acting as a guardian of the ordinary people against the state. The *Daily Dispatch* adopted a "populist discourse that invokes the Fiskean notion of the people versus the power bloc", a discourse that is popularly visible in the tabloid, *Daily Sun* which the *Daily Dispatch* is in competition with (Fiske 1989: 28). As was seen in Chapter 4, Trench explicitly stated that one of the overarching goals of investigating at the grassroots was to help solve problems by lending an ear to marginalised groups in society which is what tabloids do.

According to Wasserman "tabloid journalists repeatedly emphasise that tabloid journalism requires the kind of legwork that the deskbound journalists working for elite newspapers have long ago squandered in favour of telephone and press release journalism" (2010: 156).

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter has provided an in-depth exploration of the *Broken Homes* investigation. It demonstrated how Ntsaluba framed his stories to show the suffering of shack dwellers in the six towns of the investigation in order to arouse public moral indignation. The Eastern Cape Housing department is portrayed as the villain in the investigation for failing to provide proper housing to the poor in the Eastern Cape. The seventh town Ugie represents a success story from which other towns can learn.

Chapter 6

Analysing the *Slumlords* project

6 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with providing an in-depth analysis of the *Slumlords* investigation against the normative prescriptions of investigative and public journalism explained in chapter two. In the chapter, I follow the some trajectory as that used in analysing the *Broken Homes* project by first providing an overview of the investigation and then going on to evaluate the intrinsic aspects of the *Slumlords* investigation. The journalistic skills and aptitudes exhibited in the investigation are also interrogated. I then explicate the outcome of the *Slumlords* investigation which I critically evaluate against the classic mobilisation model of investigative journalism by Protess et al (1991) encountered earlier. I go on to interrogate the relative success of the investigation in the light of the political, economic and media contexts within which it was carried out.

6.1 The *Slumlords* investigation: Overview and analysis

Slumlords was made up of 44 stories in total for both the online and offline versions of the paper whose lengths ranged from 3 to 21 paragraphs. 19 stories were published in the print version of the paper. Seventeen of the 19 stories were published from 18 November up to the third of December 2009 and two follow-up stories done by Sabelo Sikiti and Siya Boya and published on 7 and 9 October 2010 respectively. All the 44 stories were published in the *Daily Dispatch* online. (See Ntsaluba 2009n-bbb). 15 stories were about the narratives of the slum dwellers, 19 of which provided in depth information of the day to day circumstances of the investigation (Ntsaluba 2009pp-bbb). The other 10 stories were about the specific rooms inhabited by the slum dwellers. These stories were very brief and included information about who the rooms belonged to, how much rent they paid, the sizes of the rooms and the personalities of the people living in them (Ntsaluba 2009ff-oo). The *Daily Dispatch* online made use of "flash based plug in" which allows for an interactive floor plan for the slum house in which Ntsaluba lived in. On mouse click, each room pops up, giving the reader a chance to 'enter' and read about the people staying in the room and watch a video about them in order to see their living conditions (Daily Dispatch 2009). Using a google map, the *Daily Dispatch* pinpointed the various properties belonging to Yekela and Keyter, with a description of each property, pictures and videos. The investigation revealed that:

- Nompiliso Yekela, a human resources practitioner in the Office of the Premier owned seven residential homes in King Williams Town which she illegally turned into slums with dozens of people occupying some properties. She also built her empire under the name of God's Creation investment, a closed corporation of which she is the sole director and struck accommodation deals while hawking goods outside a clothing store.

- Kenneth Keyter owned nine properties in West Bank, in East London, which had also been converted into slums.

- A Street in Southernwood was dubbed Shebeen Road because of the number of illegal taverns in it.

- Slums contributed to the creation of drug dens, excessive noise and there was insufficient parking space and inadequate ablution facilities for the slum dwellers. Because of the absence of law and order, knife fights and general crime had become a way of life for locals. BCM however appeared unaware of the scale of the problem and failed to prosecute the slum owners (Ntsaluba 2009n-dd).

6.1.2 Analysing the *Slumlords* investigation against investigative journalism theory

This section is concerned with analysing the *Slumlords* project against investigative journalism theory encountered earlier. The stories adopted a bottom -up approach as Ntsaluba sought to 'appeal to our standards of morality' by highlighting a violation of human rights through the activities of slum owners turning residential homes into "illegal boarding houses" and the plight of the slum dwellers (Protess et al.1991: xviii; Ettema and Glasser 1998: 4-6). An element of advocacy for a better life for slum dwellers is evident when Ntsaluba shows that even though slum dwellers paid huge amounts in rent they led difficult lives since they were subjected to "dingy living conditions crammed in small rooms, they have no electricity or even proper bathrooms" (Ntsaluba 2009r). In this regard, he followed what Ettema and Glasser (1998), de Burgh (2000), Protess (1991) and other investigative journalism theorists say about investigative journalists' focus on the subject of "human rights violation and bad practices" in order to elicit sympathy for slum dwellers and to advocate for the punishment of slum owners, the closing down of slum houses and the restoration of order in the areas of the investigation (Ettema and Glasser 1998; de Burgh 2000; Protess et al. 1991).

In the *Slumlords* investigation, Ntsaluba went undercover in King Williams Town and also in Southernwood where the investigations were based. In taking the step of going undercover for a month (an important tool of the investigative reporter), Ntsaluba lived inside one of the slum

houses as a tenant in order to experience firsthand the life of slum dwellers. He writes his reports in the first person narrative to demonstrate this direct experience of slum life (Ntsaluba 2009ww). Gaines argues that "in recent years, the technique of going undercover has fallen into disrepute and has been abused over the years with some people going undercover to steal documents" (1994). Other investigative journalists go undercover in order to set up traps for targets to incriminate themselves (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 39). In contrast, for Ntsaluba the primary purpose of going undercover was not to steal documents or set traps but to experience slum conditions for himself: "Initially she had shown me some of her better places or communes but for the sake of my investigation, I wanted to be in the thick of things – so that I could get the real experience of living in the slums like her tenants" (Ntsaluba 2009pp). This offered a powerful mode of persuasion to the readers of the *Daily Dispatch* as he spoke from a position of an eye-witness (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 31). Ntsaluba was also able to win the trust of the slum dwellers. He had privileged access to their lives and was able to better perceive the world from their perspective. His bold, inquisitive, proactive and curious temperaments were also displayed when he probed and closely watched their lifestyles in the house (de Burgh 2000: 15). As a result, he knew who had hot water and electricity and who did not, when they cooked or bathed and when they did not and the challenges that they faced in their everyday lives (Ntsaluba 2009m-ee). In one of the videos online, he is seen opening the cupboards and describing the state of the kitchen while on another he is lying on one of the tenants' bed while they drank beer and shared stories. In some images online he is also seen with his hands on the shoulders of two of the slum dwellers who had become his friends. Ntsaluba even called the slum dwellers by their first names or nicknames showing his familiarity with them:

> I needed to be physically based in one of her properties by pretending I needed accommodation for a month. I rented out a room at 6 Pottinger Street. This was the crux and the best way to tell the story because it was not just about the overcrowded houses but it was about the people living in them as well. The experience of living in a slum was highly valuable for my story and for me personally as well, because it gave me the opportunity to experience what it's like not to have a shower, a proper kitchen, a fridge, privacy in the bathroom...so many things that I take for granted. What got to me the most was watching small babies being brought up under these dreadful conditions and being exposed to many things. What's worse is that their parents seemed to have given up hope of building a better and more respectable life. (Ntsaluba 2009v)

His closeness to the slum dwellers raises a lot of questions about objectivity. While boasting about how he was objective in the investigation like in the *Broken Homes* project, the close association that he had with the slum dwellers detracts from this notion of being objective. Most journalists claim to be objective in the sense that they are supposed to be non-partisan by giving two sides of a story. By living inside one of the slums, he himself became a victim:

> Within days I started making friends with the four guys who lived in a single room next to mine. They knew everybody in the house and through them I gained access to the other people. It turned out to be quite a mix of people. Some were college students, government workers and unemployed women who live with their husbands and children. I lived under the squalid conditions that she made her tenants live under and befriended them to assist me with my story. (Ntsaluba 2009v)

Ntsaluba's subjectivity was also shown through his political positioning (as a victim) and how he personalised the problems which he also told based on his own experiences. Ettema and Glasser argue that "despite investigative journalism's focus on apparently incontrovertible instances of wrong doing, escape from the paradox of the disengaged conscience is not so easy as it might first have seemed" (1998: 63). This is because media information is never neutral because activities such as selection, interpretation and applying criteria of relevance all open the door to subjectivity (Christians et al 2009: 142). "It is hard to gather and publish information without making value judgements or applying criteria of relevance that have no objective bias" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 63). As was seen in the *Broken Homes* investigation, the *Slumlords* investigation could hardly be accomplished without personal engagement and without deploying some clear value judgements (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 22-23). According to Ntsaluba:

> I did what was expected of me, which is to tell the story as objectively as I could without taking any sides. It was important for me to get inside the story. I had to write about my own personal experience as well as that of the people that I shared the house with. The second part of the story was giving the owner of the house a fair opportunity to comment and tell us her side of the story which we did. Personally I think it was balanced because both parties had a chance to state their case and I as a reporter was fortunate enough to actually live it and write about it from my personal experience. There's always dynamics that one has to look out for, so the only thing that I did unethically was lying about my identity to that woman before she agreed to let me rent out a room in the house. (Interview 26/10/10)

Getting inside and positioning himself inside the house meant that Ntsaluba began advocating for particular moral standards by showing that cramming many people in small rooms for high rentals "was not just wrong but terribly wrong" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 13).

By going undercover, Ntsaluba was also able to "free himself from the most debilitating constraints of daily journalism, the reliance on official sources, formulaic balance among contending positions and the daily deadline" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 23). In contrast to mainstream papers' reliance on government officials for news, "which gives the news a very conventional and mainstream feel and does not always lead to a rigorous examination of the major issues" (McChesney 2008: 32).

In going undercover, Ntsaluba emphasised how audacity was important for any investigative journalist and how one has to lie about his identity sometimes in order to uncover the truth in the public interest (de Burgh 2000: 16):

> I was not scared at all because that's what investigative journalism is all about. An investigative journalist has to be curious, have an inquisitive mind, guts to confront people and courage. You need to be sceptical about people and you must have an analytical mind. I wanted to establish what was going on and so I had to lie to her in order to live in one of her properties. (Interview 27/09/10)

One can draw a parallel with investigative reporter William Gaines's own experience of going undercover in order to establish if it was true that janitors were being used to take care of patients at von Solbrig Memorial Hospital in Chicago (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 39). According to Gaines "the undercover work was essential to the success of the story. If we had just written the story based on a former janitor saying this, then the hospital would have denied it" (ibid). Relating his way of life undercover which also exemplifies the kind of life experienced by many in their everyday life in the slums, Ntsaluba said "I stayed in an outside room which had nothing, literally, not even a light bulb for me to read at night. I made myself comfortable and bought a small mattress and a duvet to keep me warm at night" (Ntsaluba 2009v).

As a mainstream journalist operating in the frame of mind of the daily deadline, Ntsaluba could have just captured the pictures from outside and carried out random interviews with a few slum dwellers. In contrast, the month he spent in the slums was largely about getting access and exposing the effects of slums on the people's lives at the grassroots level and bringing out their voices. The intention of employing the technique of living with the slum dwellers is the same as that employed by ethnographers when they live with their research subjects for months in order to get the "insider's perspective" (Babbie and Mouton 2004: 53).

> That lady deserves to be exposed because she has profited from other people's problems. She has no respect for others but when it comes to collecting rent money at the end of the month, she never misses. When our fridges broke down because of daily power cuts Yekela said it was not her fault because we should have had them insured including our underpants. (Ntsaluba 2009u)

In the story headlined "There are so many people that use the bathroom", Ntsaluba made use of images of affected working class students and the "squalid conditions" they lived under. They elicit sympathy from wider society because they "are being exploited and they can't afford residence fees" (Ntsaluba 2009s). In order to elicit sympathy, Ntsaluba drew forth verbatim testimony. Mongezi Ntsume, a 21 year old student from Butterworth who stays in a room that was initially a lounge which he shares with a friend said:

> I didn't even know that I was staying in a house that was illegal. I never thought I would live like this but since I am away from home, I have learned to accept it because there is not much I can do to change things around here. I thought it was a normal thing to do.

> You can wake up early for school and still be late because there are so many people that use the bathroom. We also had our clothes stolen from the washing line and we found a person in the street wearing them. I find it hard to get peace of mind here and think about where I come from and what I want to achieve with my life. So on most weekends I leave. My mother knows that I'm squatting but there is nothing she can do about that. I just have to study hard and get out of here. (Ntsaluba 2009r)

Ngesisa Sotondoshe, a 20 year old student from Ngqamakhwe said, "I don't know what I am going to do. Accommodation is very scarce here and the few places that are available are too expensive for us to afford as students" (Ntsaluba 2009r). The problem of students' accommodation reveals that there is no affordable accommodation for working class citizens and their children. The political economy of the country characterised by deep structural inequalities shows that there is an inadequacy in housing policy especially regarding inner-city housing and according to Pillay a challenge to effective delivery in South Africa is the perceived lack of delivery by several government units (2010). There is also no RDP program that focuses on student housing. Following Heller, one can argue that the ruling party ANC is not responsive to the problems of the poor in South Africa as they are not rooted in subaltern civil society (2009: 126). Heller argues that democratic practices are being eroded and subordinate groups find themselves increasingly disempowered politically (2009: 126).

Because Ntsaluba was doing investigative journalism with public and tabloid journalism inflections (radical journalism), driven by a concern to elevate the voices of the grassroots and allowed them to define the agenda. One can draw parallel with Kaufman's experience in the *Race Factor*[4] investigation who says that:

> We spoke to all the usual suspects - all the usual characters- and they said all the usual things. And it was when we started going to the second and third level people who don't get quoted in the paper, that we came up with images that turned out to be the most gripping- a black fire fighter talking about how people at fires still call him nigger (cited in Ettema and Glasser 1998: 30).

In framing the problem, Ntsaluba prioritised the slum dwellers narrative over that of BCM and Yekela. Similar to the *Broken Homes* investigation, Ntsaluba challenged Hall et al.'s theory of primary definition in which powerful institutions, experts and government officials are positioned at the top of "a hierarchy of credibility and journalists take the frameworks for understanding events offered by representatives of such institutions as a starting point for their reports and thus become the primary definers of topics (1978: 58). BCM officials were not the primary definers because they were labelled as part of the problem. Of the 44 stories of the investigation only three stories were about BCM and it is portrayed as a villain because it "failed to enforce municipal by-

[4] The Race Factor Investigation won the Pulitzer Prize for the Boston Globe and it was concerned with revealing large scale patterns of discrimination along racial lines in Boston.

laws" (Ntsaluba 2009ee). Fifteen stories are framed based on the slum dwellers since the main narrative was theirs. Ten stories portray Yekela as the villain, as will be shown later in depth, but again she is talked about in the other stories and has no voice in them. In order to show that there is a moral outrage, investigative journalists present narratives of victims and villains (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 31). While Ntsaluba does talk about the bad behaviours of some of these slum dwellers he largely casts the blame for such behaviours on the slum owners who "cram people in small rooms" (Ntsaluba 2009p). Yekela is singled out in the *Slumlords* investigation as the key villain because she owned seven properties and exploited other private citizens to stay in the illegally subdivided houses and shacks and they paid high rent for poor conditions of living (Ntsaluba 2009p). Out of 19 stories, ten stories demonstrate the suffering of the slum dwellers at the hands of Yekela who is a private citizen.

Kenneth Keyter is another private citizen who owned "nine homes in Southernwood which are being used as hostels and a licensed tavern, subdivided into small rooms and occupied by people desperate for a roof over their heads" (Ntsaluba 2009dd). However there is just one story about him. There are a number of factors that explain why Yekela who owned seven houses was made the focus of the investigation when Keyter who owned nine was backgrounded. Ntsaluba argues that Yekela was a "government official" who "should be a servant of the people but instead she was exploiting them" and residents had complained about her at the *Southernwood Community Dialogue* (Interview 27/10/2010). It might also be argued that there might have been a race dimension to it as Ntsaluba wanted to show a black person who was exploiting other blacks in a context where there are race tensions because of apartheid. Keyter was not the key focus because the houses did not belong to him anymore: "they have owners who have taken them over, but some are still paying the installments off" (Ntsaluba 2009dd). Both Yekela and Keyter are representative of other slum owners not exposed in the investigation (Ettema and Glasser 1998).

6.1.3 Yekela as villain: analysis of article headlined *Queen of the slums: Employee in Premier's Office turns king Suburbs into ghettos*

In a story that focuses on Yekela headlined *Queen of the slums: Employee in Premier's Office turns king Suburbs into ghettos* Yekela was exposed on the front page (Ntsaluba 2009n). The story was accompanied by a huge emboldened headline and image of Yekela which both stand out to show that she was engaging in a practice that was "not just wrong but terribly wrong" (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 13). The image is in bright red which is a strategy that newspapers use to lure readers to buy the paper. In the six paragraphs of the story, Yekela is portrayed as the key villain exposed by the investigation as Ntsaluba seeks to mobilise public opinion against her since she "runs a sideline empire in slum housing and whose illegal operations are single handedly

reducing respectable suburbs to ghettos" (Ntsaluba 2009m). Yekela made R80 000 a month from overcharging her tenants who lived under "squalid conditions" while she lived in "*luxury*" and made profit from her "six houses which have been converted into boarding slums that are crammed full of people paying high rent for small rooms" (Ntsaluba 2009n and o). In this story, Ntsaluba made use of phrases like "squalid conditions" "signs of decay" and "shabby neighbourhoods" to show that running slums was a bad practice and a deviation from established societal standards of morality (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 32). According to Ntsaluba, the slums run by Yekela have "health, safety and building violations" and BCM was aware of it (Ntsaluba 2009ee). BCM officials were also portrayed as villains (but they were not the primary villains) who knew about the problem of slumlords but did not bother to take action. In another story headlined "*Slums: BCM In the dock*" (Ntsaluba 2009ee), Ntsaluba demonstrated that residents raised complaints to BCM but without action.

> Buffalo City Municipality has done nothing to shut down illegal slums – despite numerous pleas from King William's Town residents. Correspondence in the possession of the *Dispatch* shows that BCM's legal division and council are aware of the problems. In a letter dated 6 July 2009 to Mxolisi Mlotana, head of BCM's legal services, DA councillor Annette Rademeyer said she had forwarded numerous complaints from residents to BCM, which were ignored. (Ntsaluba 2009ee)[5]

After the exposure of Yekela by the *Daily Dispatch*, the Office of the Premier, according to Ntsaluba:

> Spoke out in her defence saying no action will be taken against her because her communes are above board and that she declared her business interests. Bhisho spokesperson Mzukisi Ndara had said that there was no need for the Premier's intervention since Yekela's ownership of the rental properties worth R6.265 million in King William's town had not in any way conflicted with the interest of her work and that there was no evidence that she used state subsidies or resources to run her business thereby following the necessary procedures. The office of the Premier also said that the last time she had a state subsidy was on her first house, which she finished in 2002. The statement did not say if the Premier was aware that Yekela was running an illegal empire in between doing her day job and masquerading as a street hawker in town. (Ntsaluba 2009)

Ntsaluba argues that "residents have had attempts to get help from authorities but without success", and so as an investigative journalist he embarked on a quest to try and get BCM to take action against slumlords (Ntsaluba 2009). As shown earlier this happened after ten months. The narratives of these victims and villains make up the moral argument of the story. Ntsaluba let the slum dwellers say how they felt about her. This made the moral argument more compelling in order to evoke "moral indignation" and alter public opinion (Step two of the mobilisation model) so they could put pressure on BCM to prosecute the slumlords (Step three of the mobilisation

[5] For extracts of the letter from Rademeyer see article headlined *Slums: BCM In the dock* published on 19November 2009.

model). Ettema and Glasser argue that when investigative journalists' stories call attention to the breakdown of social systems and the disorder within public institutions that cause injury and injustice, they implicitly demand the response of the public and officials to that breakdown and disorder thereby acting as custodians of public conscience (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 3). National government was not directly implicated in the moral force of Ntsaluba's investigation. This may explain why there was no action from this tier of government.

One of the elements of "moral craftwork" is the "legal edge to the story" (Ettema and Glasser 1989) shown when Ntsaluba provides evidence to show that Yekela was violating municipal by-laws by subdividing houses illegally with no approved building plans; inadequate ablution facilities, having more than two people co-habiting a room; insufficient parking space; excessive noise pollution; and refuse removal laws that were being broken (Ntsaluba 2009n-dd).

Apart from being exposed to slum life inside 6 Pottinger Street where he rented a house, Ntsaluba also had access to neighbours who lived in slums and those who lived next door in 'proper' houses and he also moved around in Southernwood in order to make more friends and to see the conditions for himself. "I moved around the neighbourhood so that I could establish networks with other slummers" (Ntsaluba 2009tt; vv). Neighbours complained that the proliferation of slums was resulting in the "decrease in property value and bringing down the standards and the image of the area because of crime, drinking in the street and having sex on pavements" (Ntsaluba 2009s). Ntsaluba's use of value laden language and hyperbole in the stories for example "uncontrolled filth, decay and excessive noise" are narrative strategies employed to show the gravity of the situation and in order to build empathy for home owners living near slums. The repeated use of these terms helped to "police the boundaries between order and deviance" (de Burgh 2000: 15).

While Ntsaluba was effective in showing how the slumlords flouted municipal by-laws through the focus on the micro experience (the lived experience of the slum dwellers), the *Slumlords* investigation failed at a deeper level to explicitly focus on the bigger problem - that of the failure of public housing policy. Yekela and Keyter were scapegoats in the investigation. The proliferation of slums is deeply rooted in the larger problem of inadequate accommodation in South Africa. In their effort to create moral narratives, investigative journalists aim at the most obvious villains (in this case, Yekela and Keyter). Ntsaluba did take aim at the BCM, but far fewer stories were written about local government, and they were portrayed as neglectful rather than 'villainous'. This begs the question: could the BCM have been forced to act if they had been directly and consistently portrayed as villains? Fort Hare and Walter Sisulu Universities were also

not portrayed as villains since they were not doing anything to provide enough accommodation for their students.

Meanwhile, while it is doubtless true that since national housing policy is complex and abstract it is more difficult to paint national officials and policymakers as 'villainous', Ntsaluba failed to point to the national Department of Human Settlements as a potential villain in the slumlords issue at all. Since it was never implicated in Ntsaluba's moral narrative, it is perhaps not surprising that, unlike in the *Broken Homes* investigation, the national government did bother not get involved in the slumlords issue.

On the other hand, even if local or national government had been more directly implicated in the moral narrative, one cannot assume that they would have acted promptly to deal with the problem. This is because, as Merrill points out, when "the media take an adversarial stance against government it tends to respond with caution, distrust, scepticism, with a minimum of openness and frankness and with a certain hostility" and fail to address the situation at hand as they battle with the media at the expense of ordinary citizens (1996: 16).

6.2 Outcome

After the publication of the story, there was no quick action to prosecute slumlords by BCM. Only two of the seven properties belonging to Yekela that Ntsaluba wrote about were closed down – and this was ten months after the Slumlords investigation was first published. No action has been taken with regards to Keyter's properties. Ntsaluba won the Vodacom Journalist of the Year Award and the *Slumlords* investigation also won the CNN Africa Digital Journalism Award beating more than 2000 entries in Africa for the way it employed creative internet tools in order to provide irrefutable evidence of the "squalid" living conditions that the slum dwellers were subjected to (Daily Dispatch 2009). In relation to the award, Trench said:

> This is the most prestigious award yet won by the *Daily Dispatch*. For the online team to have prevailed over more than 2000 entries from across the continent shows that the *Daily Dispatch* is not only able to compete with the best in South Africa but with the best in the world. It is heartening to see that stories from East London and the Eastern Cape can be appreciated so far away from home. (Daily Dispatch 2009)

The online editor Jan Hennop alluded this success to the paper's ability of researching a "good story" together with the availability of a team of skilled people at the *Daily Dispatch*:

> We have always believed that the most important thing is not how you tell the story – but the story itself that you tell. But we also believe that our success was due to a mix of a good story and how it translated to the Web. That's why we developed what we believed was a unique brand of journalism that pioneered online journalism in the world. Our success was also based on a multi-talented team with various skills, working towards a single goal and product (Interview 5/11/2010).

In a statement to the media, judge and CNN bureau chief in South Africa, Kim Norgaard, showed appreciation for the *Daily Dispatch*'s work:

> The *Daily Dispatch* team did a thorough investigative report on slumlords and slum dwellings in King William's Town. But it is the enriching of the story with creative tools from the internet that earns them this award. For example, the viewer can take a tour of the slum house, can look at their own neighbourhood to see if there are slum houses on your street and can even report suspected slumlords. All of this enables the viewer to continue on a journey of discovery. (2009)

Despite the plaudits that the *Slumlords* investigation got and the huge public response it evoked in East London, BCM took no action until ten months later. To illuminate some of the reasons for this lack of action, the next section provides a critical analysis of the *Slumlords* investigation using the mobilisation model.

6.3 The mobilisation model and the *Slumlords* investigation

This section evaluates the *Slumlords* investigation against the classic 'mobilisation model' of investigative journalism outlined by Protess et al. (1991). *Slumlords* exhibited the first step of the mobilisation model, where vigilant journalists use their innovative research methods to bring wrong doing into light. It also exhibited Step Two when it 'altered public opinion' after many readers "made a big fuss about the *Slumlords* investigation by emailing and calling the paper because it was a story that was relevant to them as they see it [slums] every day as they drive by" (Ntsaluba interview 19/02/2010). The readers' outcry and the discernible change in public opinion showed that they did not condone Yekela's behaviour, but this did not translate into "pressuring the government for reforms" (Protess et al. 1991: 18). It can therefore be argued that *Slumlords* lived out Waisbord's observation that:

> A story can incite controversy or have no repercussions, depending on previous stories or existing beliefs about the subject. Reactions however are contingent on a number of factors unrelated to a reporter's work, such as the mood of public opinion, the dynamics of policy making, and specific ingredients of denunciations. (2000: xviii)

This lack of pressure on government by the public also tallies with the critique of the mobilisation model which shows that "if the public is a necessary link between the media and policy changes, then that link is weak and unreliable since government officials proceed to leave out the public in the problem solving equation (Protess et al 1991.: 18). Following Heller, the reason why there was no action for so long relates to the problem of "citizens failing to hold the state into account" (2009: 6). According to Heller "there are in fact very few points of contact with the state for ordinary citizens as state society relations in the developing democracies tend to be dominated by patronage and populism. Local government is absent or weak in much of the developing world including South Africa" (ibid). Heller argues that "formal representative institutions have failed

to make the state and the process of making and implementing policies responsive to popular sovereignty resulting in democracies being marked by both participatory failures (who participates and how they participate) and substantive failures (translating popular inputs into concrete outputs) (2009: 1-2). Trench highlighted that lack of political accountability was a problem in the country:

> The flaw is in the idea of political accountability or accountability to a community. I think for me, that's like the critical flaw in South Africa at the moment. I think there is a disconnection between the sort of day to day demand by citizen response and for action and a response for action being taken by some people in power. (Trench interview 26/08/2010)

Ntsaluba and Sikiti offered different reasons as to why there was no quick action from the Eastern Cape Municipal government after the slumlords exposé. According to Sikiti, one of the two journalists who did a follow-up of the *Slumlords* investigation:

> At some level the city has decided to take action. I remember at the time when the investigation was exposed we sent questions forward to the city and they couldn't confirm whether they were doing anything. After we wrote an article that the city was doing nothing, it started moving on them. It started checking on the individual properties. But it took them very long to respond and only two properties were handed over to the legal services department to shut them down and it is something that is continuing. (Sikiti interview 5/11/2010)

When asked to elaborate on why the response of BCM was slow and satisfactory, Sikiti showed that the housing problem was a structural one:

> Because of bureaucratic processes, it is difficult for them to actually manage because the moment that you start focusing on one person it's like something that will keep on mushrooming. In East London I know for a fact that the creation of slum houses is virtually out of control because of the fact that there is Walter Sisulu and Fort Hare Universities that cater for students that come from poor backgrounds and you get people who are paying R200 and R250 rent and these slumlords are targeting those kinds of people. Also in King William's town students who study at Lovedale, Alice or at Fort Hare, it's basically the same situation. And you are really seeing a period where months and months go by and years and years go by before anything is really done. I really think there is not enough regular inspection on these properties and this is something that is happening in the city so people should know about it. The city should know about it and councillors should know about it but I think there are bigger problems for them than this which is also something that is quite serious. (Sikiti interview 5/11/2010)

Economic reasons are also contributing to BCM failing to fully carry out its activities in the city. According to an article, BCM was on "the brink of financial ruin because of debts and poor rates collections and auditors' reports showed that there was mismanagement of funds within the institution" (2010).

According to Trench, the reason why it took a long time for BCM to act was politically motivated:

> Buffalo City's political institutions are so smothering that local government bureaucrats are either too afraid to act or feel that they can't move without a clear message from their political bosses. (Interview 19/02/2010)

In response to the same question, Ntsaluba pointed out that some government officials might have been slumlords themselves:

> There were political interests at stake, some government officials might also be slumlords. I found out that the woman was still carrying on. Government officials are never held accountable which is a big problem in this country. (Interview 27/09/2010)

It has been seen that the editorial staff of the *Daily Dispatch* provided different reasons to explain what they thought about why it took BCM ten months to close down some of the slum houses that Ntsaluba had exposed in the *Slumlords* investigation. As stated earlier on, it was beyond the scope of this research to talk to BCM in order to hear their side of the story.

Meanwhile, Protess et al. found that policy making proposals may be triggered by pre-publication transactions between journalists and policy makers and that these transactions are more collaborative and less adversarial than the monitorial watchdog role is thought to be (1991: 18). This suggests that the *Daily Dispatch* could have adopted a more 'collaborative' approach and entered into a normative agreement with BCM against a common target - the slumlords (Christians et al. 2009: 199). Christians et al. argue that "collaboration through acceptance is the only type that deals specifically and exclusively with merits of a collaborative role for journalism (2009: 199). They argue that journalists only enter into "*fully normative* agreements to collaborate after taking into account *all that needs to be known* about the *particular arrangements*" (2009: 200 emphasis in the original). They also consider "the *outcomes of collaboration*, including an assessment of the consequences of the cooperation for the larger community and judge the collaborative role to be correct and proper" (ibid).

6.4 The *Slumlords* investigation and public journalism

This section evaluates the *Slumlords* investigation against public journalism theory explained in chapter 1. By embedding himself in one of the slums that belonged to Yekela, Ntsaluba was able to give the slum dwellers prominence in his stories as newsmakers in King Williams Town. He was able to narrate the stories through voices of students, unemployed poor citizens, working class and petty middle class citizens who stayed in the slum houses thereby conforming to one of the key practices by Nip of giving ordinary people a voice (2008: 180). The *Southernwood Community Dialogue* was a listening strategy that the paper employed for citizens to talk about their problems. Through Ntsaluba's framing of the master narrative of the prevalence and problems of slums and the use of value laden language in order to show the gravity of the

problems of slum dwellers as seen in the previous section, the *Daily Dispatch* conformed to a key practice of public journalism by Nip in which stories are covered in a way that "facilitates public understanding" (2008: 180).

Harwood and McCrehan argue that reporters are also supposed to go to 'third places' where people gather to talk and do things together to listen to people's concerns" (2000). While Trench pronounced that the *Daily Dispatch* was doing public journalism, the paper has not routinely adopted strategies of 'going to third places to stimulate intimate living room or kitchen conversations" because of several reasons including resource limitations (see chapter 4). In the *Slumlords* investigation, it can be argued that Ntsaluba was able to stimulate such intimate conversations with slum dwellers whom he stayed with because they had become close friends and he closely watched their daily living. It can also be argued that through the *Community Dialogues*, the paper is making its newsroom accessible in the effort to listen to the public in a continuous and systematic way (Lambeth 1998) reshaping the news agenda in a back and forth cycle (Charity 1995). The *Dispatch Civics* also attempt to reduce the disconnection that exists between key political leaders and citizens however in the light of the economic constraints that the paper is facing.

The *Slumlords* investigation was born out of a public journalism-inspired town-hall like meeting called the *Southernwood Community Dialogue* as seen in Chapter 4. The story's execution hinged on some of the key practices of public journalism that the investigation employed. One of the reasons for the *Daily Dispatch's* nurturance of the *Community Dialogues* including Southernwood was to allow journalists to share their agenda setting function with citizens (Haas 2007: 32 and Nip 2008: 180) and to find compelling story ideas. The *Daily Dispatch*'s agenda was informed by this meeting thereby giving birth to the *Slumlords* investigation. It can be argued, following Haas, that by setting up the *Southernwood Community Dialogue*, the *Daily Dispatch* was committing itself to the creation of an open-ended unbounded public sphere to which all citizens have access (2007: 29).

While the creation of a space for citizens to inform the *Daily Dispatch*'s agenda was a very fundamental step that the paper took together with the commitment of carrying out the *Slumlords* investigation by immersion into the grassroots, the stories did not stimulate sustained citizen deliberation of the problems of slumlords though it did attract phone calls and comments on the online version of the paper. There was no evidence of how much traffic there was online as the paper did not keep track of it but according to Ntsaluba "there was a huge response to the story and people where calling me from all over" (Interview 27/10/2010). While it can be argued that the huge response to the *Slumlords* investigation reflects that there was some kind of mass

mediated deliberation advocated by Haas (2007: 28), there was no face to face dialogue among citizens of Southernwood as the paper failed to turn this huge public outcry into sustained deliberation. The various explanations to this are that the paper did not carry out a post-publication *Southernwood Community Dialogue* in order to give citizens an opportunity to deliberate on how the slumlords problem could be solved, hence failing to "engage the community in problem solving" (Nip 2008: 180; Haas 2007: 40). Trench made it explicit that the paper failed to take the story further because of the threat posed by scarce resources which supports Iggers' view that the commercial context of most public journalism, limits media owners' interests of promoting broad based citizen participation in democratic processes (1998) as was seen in Chapter 4:

> I think if we had more time and resources, I would have liked us to have named and shamed a hell of a lot more of the slumlords. I think what we were lacking there was a sense of the scale. I think we were able to illustrate, like, the reality of what it is and to give some examples of how people were profiting from it. I mean we knew, through the meeting in Southernwood, that there were really dozens and dozens of people who were doing it. I think if we had more time and resources. I would have liked to be able to put a slumlord a day on the front page of the paper. I think if it was done in that way, in a more sustained way, it also might have helped in terms of resulting in action being taken. We had to make some pragmatic choices in terms of how much we could invest further in terms of resources for a story like that. (Interview 26/08/2010)

News editor, Brett Horner, advocates for a facilitative monitorial role where investigative journalists after publishing exposés do not wait for things to happen but actively participate in making things happen. According to Horner, the *Daily Dispatch* should return to *Southernwood* as he feels "deeply unsatisfied with the notion that we should just put stuff out there and if the world ignores it, too bad" (Interview 19/02/2010). Horner says that in a smaller city like East London, the *Dispatch* has to play an active role in prodding civil society into life thereby playing the facilitative role in which "citizens are taken seriously in clarifying and resolving public problems in order to promote democratic pluralism" (Christians et al 2009: 159). "We can't do everything for you, but let's get going" (Horner interview 19/02/2010). While Ntsaluba was able to demonstrate that there was a "real crisis", through the negative portrayal of slumlords and the problems that were caused by the proliferation of slums, he did not go a step further to activate the platform for effective public problem solving proposed by Haas in which "journalists encourage citizens to continue their deliberations and act upon outcomes within the institutions of the wider civil society" (2007: 45). When asked about this, Ntsaluba said that "I would have loved to take the story further and convene a *Southernwood Dialogue* second time around, more people would attend because they're aware and angry" (Ntsaluba interview 26/10/2010). However he says that "I might consider doing the story again at a national level and hoping that it will yield positive results" (Ntsaluba interview 26/10/2010). The *Southernwood Community*

Dialogue can thus be seen as an ad hoc venue for discussion, a small and temporary site for a debate managed by and too often for the press" in the case of the *Daily Dispatch*, to enrich their news agenda and appeal to the audiences directly affected by those issues (Glasser 1991: 11).

While the *Community Dialogues* have fallen short of what Haas' notion of the 'deliberating public," which says that citizens share a commitment to engage in ongoing face to face and mass mediated deliberation (2007: 28), it is difficult to deny the power of what was achieved and the potential for the future. However, the *Daily Dispatch's* commitment to the idea of nurturing a more sustainable public sphere and establishing a more dialectical relationship between the *Dialogues* and civil society together with the resuscitation of the watchdog role (Trench interview 19/02/2010) continues to be threatened by resource constraints as seen in Chapter four.

The above section has shown that *Slumlords*, in which Trench proclaimed that the paper was doing public journalism, conformed to some of the key practises of public journalism but did not demonstrate full commitment to Haas' philosophy for public journalism particularly activating public deliberation and public problem solving.

6.5 Conclusion

The previous section has shown how the *Slumlords* investigation was constituted as Ntsaluba sought to evoke emotions of anger against the slumlords who were portrayed as the villains in the investigation. Following Protess et al.'s (1991) mobilisation model, anger against slumlords ideally should have resulted in the public pressuring the government for reforms (Step 2 of the mobilisation model) which did not happen as effectively as was hoped. The public did not play any role in "deliberating about how the slumlords problem could be solved which suggests that the public is a weak link in policy making as seen in the revision of the mobilisation model. The editorial staff of the *Daily Dispatch* provided various reasons as to why there was no quick action from government. Using ideas from the political and media contexts section, I also attempted to give their viewpoints to back up the arguments. The next chapter concludes the thesis by comparing the two investigations and making recommendations for future research.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is a reflection of the important issues that emerged from this research. This study was an exploration of the origins, purposes, journalistic practices and outcomes of two award-winning *Daily Dispatch* editorial projects namely *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords*. **Chapter 1** provided the normative theories that informed this thesis. It presented the four part typology of press roles by Christians et al. (2009) summarised as the monitorial, facilitative, collaborative and radical roles. The chapter also provided in-depth normative prescriptions of investigative and public journalism which are the two main types of journalisms against which the two investigations were primarily measured. The investigations were also evaluated against tabloid, development and alternative journalism because these forms of journalism resonate with some of the practices used in *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords*. **Chapter 2** provided the political, economic and media contexts in which the two investigations were carried out in order to explicate some of the factors that may constrain journalistic agency. It was also part of the research goals to critically evaluate how these theoretical frameworks developed in the North could be applied to Africa and in particular, South Africa.

Chapter 3 illustrated how the research was done and how the qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews were important in the research. Qualitative content analysis gave the researcher rich insights about what the investigations were about, how they were framed and who were constructed as the victims and the villains. The in-depth interviews enabled this researcher to take part in a "conversation with the key research subjects" on how the two investigations were done and how they could have been done better (Rosen 1998: 35). Doing the research also illuminated some of the limitations of this study which future research should explore. In the case of *Slumlords*, the researcher was not in a position to get BCM perspectives on why it took them ten months to crack down on the slumlords. For *Broken Homes*, the researcher could not get Minister Sexwale's comments on his understanding of the role of the media particularly in creating partnerships in order to solve problems together. The researcher also was not in a position to interview him to clarify on the motivations behind the actions that he and his office took after the exposure of *Broken Homes*. Because the research was about the journalistic origins, practices and outcomes, it was beyond the scope of this study for the researcher to get audience perspectives on how the problems illuminated by the two investigations could have been dealt with. The research did not turn out to be as collaborative in the co-construction (Simons 2009) of the analysis as the

researcher had anticipated it would be. In the future, participatory action research could help promote collaboration in knowledge construction between the researcher and the research subjects. The researcher hopes that Ntsaluba and other editorial staff members of the *Daily Dispatch* and other journalists would read this thesis and reflect on their everyday work. I also hope to have BCM, the Eastern Cape Housing Government and Minister Sexwale read it. **Chapter 4** interrogated the motivations for the two investigations expressed by the editorial leaders of the *Daily Dispatch* in the light of some recent theoretical work on press roles by Christians et al (2009) and the political economy critiques of public and investigative journalism encountered in Chapter two. According to the editorial staff of the *Daily Dispatch*, the commercial media system, within which the *Dispatch* is embedded, constrained journalistic agency and some of the paper's efforts at promoting civic life. The researcher however questioned the reason given about the newspaper not holding a post *Southernwood Community Dialogue* if they had acquired funding to help with the projects from Taco Kuiper.

Chapters 5 and 6 critically evaluated the two investigations against detailed normative theories of investigative and public journalism. The key question being to find out if the two investigations measured up to those standards set out by for example Ettema and Glasser (1998), De Burgh (2000), Protess et al (1991) among others. It also evaluated the investigations against tabloid and development journalism theoretical frameworks. In concluding, I offer a summary of the key findings of the thesis and then proceed to provide an overview of how things could have been done differently and recommendations for the future.

Key Findings

Both the *Slumlords* and *Broken Homes* projects were done by the same journalist Gcina Ntsaluba over three months and in the same year of 2009 and both won awards. While the two investigations illuminated the problem of housing for ordinary citizens in South Africa, they failed to interrogate the deeper structural inequalities that characterise present South African society within which the housing problem emanates. As seen in the thesis there are a number of factors that can be attributed to the failure of housing departments to meet their set housing targets for ordinary South Africans.

The two investigations were both done by adopting alternative news gathering strategies by deep immersion at a grassroots level. In both *Broken Homes* and *Slumlords*, the ordinary people were constructed as helpless victims whose function in the news narrative was to evoke sympathy from readers. This relates to the analysis by Heller about civil society being weak and subordinated to political society. As such, in both investigations the role of the public ended at the level of

informing the *Daily Dispatch's* news agenda as they were not involved later to deliberate on how the problems raised could be solved. By researching at the grassroots level, the paper also adopted elements of the facilitative role (public journalism). This was seen when the paper:

- Allowed citizens to inform their news agenda;
- Gave ordinary people a voice;
- Covered stories in a way that facilitates public understanding (Nip 2008: 180).

In framing the investigations, Ntsaluba was able to build morally charged tales of victims and villains in order to "engage public moral indignation" (Ettema and Glasser 1998). Both investigations followed two of the three steps of Protess et al.'s (1991) mobilisation model as was seen in the previous chapters. *Broken Homes* exemplified Step one where investigative journalists use their innovative research methods to bring out wrong doing. It also followed Step three when government officials introduce reforms. Step two did not happen after the investigation was published because there was a "muted public response" (Ntsaluba 2009). There was also no observable pressure on government for reforms. *Slumlords* on the other hand exemplified Step one when Ntsaluba went undercover in King William's Town and Southernwood and exposed the terrible living conditions that the slum dwellers were subjected to in their everyday life. It also showed part of Step two when it altered public opinion evidenced by "a huge public response" (Ntsaluba interview 26/10/2010). However, this change in public opinion did not result in citizens putting pressure on government for reforms. This can, at least in part, be attributed to the argument that the South African government is "immune and unresponsive to subaltern civil society" (Heller 2009). Step three did not happen because there was no government policy reformation with regards to slumlords. Instead BCM took action ten months after the *Daily Dispatch* had "written that it wasn't doing anything" (Sikiti interview 5/11/10).

To build empathy from readers and to ensure that readers see the stories in the same way as the insiders/the researched, the *Daily Dispatch* made use of innovative methods online which gave readers the opportunity to enter and see the broken houses and the shack dwellers in the *Broken Homes* investigation. In *Slumlords*- readers were able to view the slum conditions that the slum dwellers were subjected to in their daily life in order to build empathy for victims. In both investigations the *Daily Dispatch* adopted Christians et al. (2009)'s monitorial role (investigative journalism) and some elements of the facilitative role (public journalism) which implies that these roles are not mutually exclusive. In the *Slumlords* investigation, BCM took action after ten months of the exposé and the public was left out of the problem solving equation. Similarly in *Broken Homes*, the Minister Tokyo Sexwale took it upon himself to solve the problem of housing and left out the public in the problem solving equation. Ntsaluba also failed to cultivate a

platform for deliberation as stated earlier. As was demonstrated in the previous two chapters, this tallies with the revision of the mobilisation which shows that the public is a weak link in policy making as often policy makers continue to leave the public out of the policy making equation (Protess et al. 1991: 18).

7.2 Evaluation

As was seen in Chapters five and six, the two projects exhibit elements of all four roles but the strongest are the monitorial and facilitative roles. If Ntsaluba had done the collaborative role (development journalism) on top of these two roles as explained by Christians et al. (2009), in which newspapers enter into "normative agreements with government", he could have, for example, created a partnership with BCM to enforce municipal by laws in the case of *Slumlords*. During crisis, media and government sometimes enter into partnerships. Even in the face of lack of quick action by BCM to crack down on the slumlords, the editorial staff of the *Daily Dispatch* did not allow themselves to stray from the relatively narrow confines of the monitorial role. Ntsaluba said "he would love to convene another Southernwood Dialogue" (2009). This begs the question: why didn't he? Was this because there were no funds left in the Taco Kuiper fund or because he simply 'forgot' to convene the meeting (because it was outside the bounds of normal 'monitorial' journalistic practice and the problem of resources for a commercial newspaper which makes it difficult to carry out sustainable public journalism?) While the problem of housing can be deemed to be a crisis, there was no creation of a formal collaborative partnership between the *Dispatch* and local/provincial/national government. Why is this? Is it due to the adversarialism currently characterising government-media relations? Or is it simply because these partnerships are too far outside the norm? In this context, the paper needs to "collaborate" and engage in pre-publication transactions with government officials as one of the ways to promote problem solving in the light of weak civil society. Following Christians et al. (2009) collaboration' is not always a formal one, but is usually premised on a commitment by the press to play a positive role in the processes of development. Responsibility tempers press freedom: "journalists can question, even challenge the state, but not to a point where they undermine a government's basic plans for progress and prosperity" (Christians et al. 2009: 201).

The investigations also demonstrated that there was no full commitment to public journalism because a full commitment to public journalism could have resulted in the paper cultivating a platform for face to face dialogue and deliberation amongst the citizens themselves and with government officials and encouraged public problem solving which is very crucial in the South African context where, following Heller, civil society is weak and disengaged politically in making decisions that affect their destiny. A full commitment to the facilitative role could also

have strengthened Step two of Protess et al.'s (1991) mobilisation model in which investigations alter public opinion and citizens put pressure on government for reforms. This suggests that mainstream newspapers can enhance their monitorial role (investigative journalism) by embracing the facilitative role (public journalism) which will allow for investigations that are deeply entrenched in the lives of the people at a grassroots level and also activate public participation during and after such exposures. As was seen in the two investigations, the *Daily Dispatch* failed to activate a platform for deliberation and public problem solving which they argued was due to resource constraints. There might thus be more scope in adopting a 'facilitative monitorial role' which would not only expose those who violate other people's human rights, corrupt people and institutions that are not performing well. In addition it will:

- Allow ordinary people to set the news agenda;
- Elevate ordinary citizens' voices;
- Promote ongoing face-to-face citizen deliberation (Haas 2007);
- Activate civic life;
- Promote public problem solving (Haas 2007).

In the case of the two investigations one can argue that newspapers practising investigative journalism can learn from public journalism. Moral outrage engages public conscience (and sometimes it does not), but it does not solve public problems if civic life is weak and there is public apathy. Such newspapers can also learn from tabloid or alternative journalism. While tabloid journalism has been criticised for sensationalising issues, it covers issues that resonate with the experiences of the people in their daily life (Wasserman 2010: ix). Tabloid journalism however also falls short of the notion of deliberation and public problem solving which public journalism offers. As such, the creation of a space where citizenry and policy makers discuss and come up with solutions to problems can help alleviate problems facing particularly sub-altern civil society in the current South Africa context and help in the move away from government to public problem solving.

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Appendices

Broken promises broken homes

Thousands of EC poor live in despair Wednesday 29 July 2009

BHISHO is spending R360 million to fix nearly 20 000 broken homes in the province while the poor live in flimsy cardboard units and ghost towns emerge from the ruins of disastrous housing projects. In some areas of the province communities have deserted formal housing settlements because the homes were so poorly built they cannot live in them any longer.19 662 houses delivered in the 2006/2007 financial year. While the provincial government tries to rein in its backlog of 800 000 RDP homes, a two-month investigation by the Dispatch has revealed how:

□ Homes were built in areas which people have long since left;

□ One project in Seymour became State-sponsored "holiday homes" for people who live in other cities and only return in December;

□ Residents in Burgersdorp were moved into cardboard houses when their RDP homes began falling to the ground, and were then asked to clean up the mess themselves;

□ One project of 600 homes in Tarkastad has been standing empty, while a waiting list to house people continues to grow;

□ Depopulation and inferior construction in places like Venterstad has led to the emergence of ghost towns; and

□ A community near Bhisho is still waiting after five years for electricity and water because the government refuses to provide the services until it has finished the housing project it started eight years ago. The biggest victims in the province's housing fiasco are among the most vulnerable in the population. Like two pensioners, Loki Makeleni and Ngqukuse Nonxaza, who have been living in a flimsy cardboard home for seven months while their shoddy RDP house in Burgersdorp is repaired.

"The government doesn't care about people who live here. We're going to die in these houses. I'm just waiting for my coffin right now," said the elderly Makeleni. To rub salt into their wounds, the local Gariep Municipality wanted the same residents to clear the tons of rubble lining the streets – for free.

The problems in Burgersdorp are far from unique – in fact, all but one of eight housing projects visited by the Dispatch are being rebuilt. In many cases inexperienced contractors have been blamed for the problems.

Two weeks ago Housing MEC Nombulelo Mabandla vowed to blacklist incompetent builders and recover funds from them where necessary. But she said her department would never forsake emerging contractors and would do all they could to mentor them in future. "That is why we have developed a training programme for them, called the Emerging Contractors Development Programme," she said. Seymour and Venterstad are two examples where RDP homes have been deserted or remain unoccupied because there are no local jobs, or poor workmanship has made the buildings unsafe.

Yet the reverse has happened in Tarkastad, where more than 600 residents are on a waiting list to occupy low cost homes in a nearby project that is standing empty. Derek Luyt from the Public Service Accountability Monitor in Grahamstown said the department's Service Delivery Charter and Service Delivery Plans for 2009 and 2010 highlight its pitfalls. "Staff shortages and lack of sufficient skills have severely hampered the department in the past, and it will not be able to deliver sufficient houses of adequate quality unless it solves its human resources problems," Luyt said.

Democratic Alliance spokesperson Pine Pienaar said the huge backlog, lack of monitoring and under-spending in the department was a direct result of the department's inefficiency to fill critical posts in technical and finance departments.

Ntsaluba, G. 2009d. 'Residents freeze waiting for homes to be rebuilt 'Ultimate insult' – being asked to clean the streets for free.' Published on 29/07/2009 p.4

RESIDENTS who were move d out of a poorly built RDP housing project in Burgersdorp and placed in cardboard shelters have been asked to clean the town ship's rubble-strewn streets – for free.

The municipality's calls for volunteers to help clear up the mess in Thembisa has been viewed as the ultimate insult by those made homeless after inferior construction forced them out of their low-income homes.

"That is ridiculous. "How can they expect us to work and not get paid when we are already suffering and don't have houses?" asked Thandiswa Gatyeni, who lives in a cardboard house given to her family by the municipality.

Tons of building material and rubble has been left over from the RDP housing project, whose929 houses are undergoing repairs at a cost of R12.5 million. Residents such as Gatyeni claimed that officials from the municipality had fooled them into attending a meeting under the pretence that they were going to get jobs in the clean-up project.

"We all went thinking we were going to get jobs but when we arrived they told us that there were no jobs. "It was a lie to get us to go to the meeting. "They said since we were there, we must volunteer to sweep the streets for free."Her family was moved out of its original house because it was in such a bad state that the municipality promised to rebuild it from scratch. But the reconstruction has not yet been finished. Another resident, Noluvuyo Kolomba, who lives in a cardboard house with six children, said it was insulting to ask unemployed people to work for free when there were other people, such as municipal workers, who were paid to do the same job.

"They are taking advantage of the fact that we are desperate for jobs, so they think that we are dumb people who will work for free while others get a salary at the end of the month," said the 38-year-old mother of three, who also looks after three orphans.

She said they were moved out of their house in January and told the reconstruction of their home would take three weeks before they could move back into a better and safer house. Six months later they are still living in dire poverty, in a cardboard house that is freezing. "When you wake up, you can see frost on your blanket."

When the Dispatch visited the area in mid-July, it looked like a war zone. The streets were full of left over construction material and demolished houses. Gariep's municipal manager and spokesperson, Thembinkosi Mawonga, said there must have been a communication breakdown because the municipality had never promised anyone a job and had been asking for volunteers to help clean the streets."There was no mention of money.

Even in the council documents there are no financial implications with this project."A resolution was taken to use volunteers from schools and other sectors of the community," he said. Mawonga said the big clean-up had been initiated after complaints were received about illegal dumping sites and other rubbish on the streets.

Ntsaluba, G. 2009j. 'It's humiliating ... I've never owned a house.' Published on 31/07/2009 p.3

Nolungethi Ntsali feels acutely embarrassed to admit she's never had a place she can call her own."It is humiliating to tell people that I have never owned a house at my age," said the Tarkastad grandmother. Her story is a sad tale of living with the scourge of poverty for a lifetime. Even now, Ntsali can barely make ends meet with her monthly pension grant of R1 100, which she uses to support her eightyear-old grandson. Ntsali said it was humiliating

as a woman to tell people that she has never owned a house before and that she has lived most of her adult life working on farms."I grew up hard and lived a tough life working on a farm that my parents used to work on before they left and went back to Transkei to live in Cala," she explained. "I have grandchildren but I have never owned a house of my own. I live in someone else's house. They're from my church and were kind enough to lend it to me because I had nothing when I came back to retire from the farm."

Her chances of getting an RDP house do not look promising either because she is competing with 600 other people on a waiting list. Ntsali lost out during the establishment of two RDP projects consisting of 1 671 houses in Matyhantya and Zola townships in 2007. And now she lives a life of uncertainty, knowing any day could be her last in her borrowed home, which she has been occupying

since January. "You can never get too comfortable when you live in another person's house because you don't know when they will want it back," she said. Ntsali said she had to stop working because her health was failing her and her age was also catching up. When she left the farm, she had to take along her grandson after the child's mother left for Cape Town. Despite her circumstances she tries to remain positive. "I am a church person and I believe that God will answer my prayers one day. I just have to be patient.

Ntsaluba, G. 2009c. 'Housing department 'won't repeat mistakes'. Published on 29/07/2009 p.1

HOUSING MEC Nombulelo Mabandla has admitted her department has failed to adequately deliver homes to the poor after it under spent by more than R1 billion in the past three years. She said a total of 60 projects in all eight districts of the province would undergo varying degrees of rectification at a cost of R360 million.

Mabandla said the allocation of houses in places such as Seymour – where an entire housing project was standing empty because people had migrated to larger towns in search of jobs –was due to poor management by housing officials from municipalities responsible for allocating houses to beneficiaries."As the department we build houses as per the application by municipalities and we approve projects on the basis that there are identified beneficiaries."

She said in cases where houses had not been occupied, they insisted the municipality concerned find people on waiting lists who could take ownership."It is true that in some areas we don't have jobs. "That is why we have shifted from just building houses to creating integrated human settlements, where we will ensure that jobs also are created," she said. One example was Ugie, where a housing project had been developed alongside a massive R1.5bn investment by PG Bison in a timber factory. Mabandla said the poor standard of housing was the main concern of the department. "Structural

defects in these houses are due to shoddy workmanship by our contractors, and more especially from emerging contractors.

"That is why we now have a plan to train our emerging contractors under the Emerging Contractor Development programme – to make sure this does not happen again," she said. During her Policy and Budget Speech in June, Mabandla said her department had delivered 18 424 houses during the 2008/2009 financial year, an improvement from the previous year's 12 684. She said the department's total budget of R1.474bn would enable the department to reach its targeted goal of delivering19 000 houses next year.

Internal problems have plagued the department for years. This reached the point where Pretoria dispatched a special task team to the province in July last year to provide technical support and assist in accelerating and improving the delivery rate of houses in the province. Mabandla said her department had plans to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. "As from this financial year, we will make sure that our project management capacity is enhanced so that we have project managers and building inspectors all the time at every stage of each project to ensure the quality of the houses," she said.

Ntsaluba, G. 2009f. 'Progress slow in fixing RDP homes.' Published on 29/07/2009 p.4

THINGS went from bad to worse for two Burgersdorp pensioners, who had been living in a crumbling RDP house –and were then moved into a homemade of cardboard. Loki Makeleni and Ngqukuse Nonxaza have been living in their flimsy shelter in the informal settlement of Thembisa for seven months now, far more than the two months they were told they would have to endure while their house was being patched up. Conditions are unbearable and the papery walls offer hardly any relief from the devastating winter cold. "We wake up with aching bodies all the time because we don't sleep properly," said Makeleni. "This house is too cold. We can freeze and die here anytime." Makeleni said if they left water in a bucket overnight it froze. "And we can't exactly make a fire inside because it will burn the whole housed own," said Makeleni. The couple said the only form of income they received was a monthly pension of R1 100.

"It's hard, especially for old people like us who are always sick and need money to go to the clinic," said Makeleni, who has a chest problem and struggles to breathe properly. She said it seemed they would be living in their cardboard abode for a few more months considering the slow pace at which their house was being rebuilt. "They were supposed to have finished five months ago and it does not seem like they will finish any time soon, because they sometimes stop for days."

The temporary house they live in is virtually empty except for a lone cupboard and two single beds. There is no electricity, running water or a proper toilet. The floor is made of thick cardboard with visible gaps and the roof has no ceiling, only a zinc slate.

"The government doesn't care about people who live here. We're going to die in these houses. I'm just waiting for my coffin right now," said Makeleni. Gariep Local Municipality Mayor Ncedo Ngoqo

said the cardboard houses were a temporary measure to put a roof over peoples' heads while their houses were renovated. But he admitted there were problems with the current contractor who was given the job of fixing the broken homes. "We are working tirelessly with the contractor to finish these houses as soon as possible. "The funding has already been approved by the Department of Housing," said Ngoqo.

Ntsaluba G. 2009e Teen killed as RDP home collapses on him Daily Dispatch, Wednesday, July 29,

ZOLEKA Dwili never thought the day would come when she would have to bury her son, let alone her youngest, at the tender age of 13. While the country was celebrating Youth Day on June 16, her youngest boy, Sonwabile, died in a freak accident after an RDP house in which he had been playing collapsed on him and two friends in Burgersdorp. His body was trapped under the rubble of the structure, which was being renovated by a building contractor.

"I thought I was losing my mind. He had said he was going out to play just like he usually did but I had no idea it would be the last time I saw my boy," she said during a Dispatch visit to Thembisa, a township in Burgersdorp, three weeks ago. Speaking from the site of the house where her son had died, Dwili said the contractor had given the family R4 700 as compensation for his death.

"The contractor came to see us (the family) shortly after the accident with some people from the municipality and they gave us money which we used for the funeral," she said. Dwili's sister Nozukile Jantjie, who was the first family member at the scene of the accident, said she remembered it like it happened yesterday. "I did not want to believe it. My neighbour told me that he could have been one of the boys injured while playing inside an old house.

"My body just went cold after she told me but I started walking towards the house where she said the accident happened. "The closer I got the more people I saw on the streets. They tried to stop me but I kept walking towards where his body was lying, just to see him." She said paramedics at the scene told her that her nephew had been killed instantly by a big chunk of a wall that landed on his head. Jantjie said both her nephew's friends survived the ordeal but sustained head and leg injuries.

Gariep Local Municipality mayor Ncedo Ngoqo said the money was not intended as compensation but rather as financial assistance for the family to give their son a proper burial. "According to what was reported to me, the subcontractor asked the boys to leave but they did not listen and came back, so nobody knew they were inside when the wall fell down."I'm sure it was purely an accident," said Ngoqo.

Ntsaluba, G. 2009aa. 'You can't sleep ... it might be our door kicked down next.' Published on 26/11/2009 p.6

Southernwood is one tough neighbourhood these days. Just ask Kholiswa Sofece, who is single-handedly raising a 14-year-old girl alongside drug dens and shebeens.

Sofece said there were far too many taverns, drug lords and addicts in the suburb.
The single mom said young lives were being destroyed, with many youths choosing a life of crime to maintain their destructive habits.
"After they (the thugs) rob or stab people on the street they run into our yard and hide in the dark because there is no electricity," said Sofece, who works as a daycare nanny.
"And when the police come, they wake us up and ask us questions, making it seem like we are the ones that rob people."
She has even seen one of her neighbours being held up at gunpoint by a group of criminals who stole a TV set and DVD player.
"It was in broad daylight and they came in and took out a gun and started packing the TV and DVD in a bag and drove off."
Sofece pays R720 a month for her tiny outside room, which is basically a shack built in the backyard of a house in Nahoon View Road.
Rent for such rooms ranges from R400 a month for a one-person shack in the backyard to R720 a month for a dwelling big enough for two people or more.
Sofece's daughter, Vathiswa, who goes to school at John Bisseker High School, said she had also witnessed crimes happening in their street in the five years they have lived in Southernwood.
She said street muggings and stabbing incidents have become so commonplace that they don't even flinch anymore.
"I have seen a lot of muggings on the street, especially on weekends just outside my house. This makes me scared of going out of the house, even to go to school, because you might get robbed or, even worse, raped," said Vathiswa.
She said there was nothing more frightening than hearing criminals fleeing outside their shack in the middle of the night as police gave chase after another robbery.
"You can't sleep peacefully because it might be our door that gets kicked down next," said Vathiswa.
"I hate living here. It was much better and safer when we lived in Quigney (where her mother used to work until the business she worked at closed down)."

Ntsaluba G. 2009x. 'Sad life in a squalid suburb.' Published on 26/11/2009 p.5

Tin shacks and wooden hovels are taking over the fine old homes of Southernwood, once an upmarket suburb of East London but now an urban squatter camp. All over the suburb the

signs of decay are evident – none more shocking than the proliferation of shanties in backyards and open spaces.

Dispatch staff spent months immersed in the shabby neighbourhoods in and around Southernwood and found the most outrageous neglect of Buffalo City Municipality's town planning regulations.

And like last week's slumlords exposé in King William's Town, there is evidence that city officials ignore pleas from residents to enforce municipal by-laws.

On February 8, 2008, residents appealed to the municipality's building inspector, Lloyd van Zyl, to stop conversions at 8 De Villiers Street where they suspected student accommodation was being developed illegally.

More than a year later a petition was sent by the same group of concerned residents to ward councillor Robbie Muzzel, imploring him to prompt some action from authorities. This time they referred to six properties in De Villiers Street which were turning into illegal boarding houses.

Similar complaints emerged at a Daily Dispatch community dialogue in Southernwood earlier this year, where residents pleaded for the Dispatch to investigate the state of housing in their neighbourhoods.

In the last two months our investigation found:

- A street in Southernwood dubbed Shebeen Road because of the number of illegal taverns in it;
- Drug dens, which the Dispatch encountered first-hand;
- Illegally sub-divided homes boasting rows of shacks on individual properties;
- Broken bottles and discarded refuse on pavements and in streets;
- Uncontrolled human sprawl with dozens of people occupying some properties.

Because of the absence of law and order, knife fights and general crime have become a way of life for locals, said residents. They also told of enduring public drunkenness, loud music and parties in the streets.

Adrienne Till, who lives in De Villiers Street, said weekends were the worst. "We just want peace and quiet here but we never get it," said Till.

Tenants pay up to R720 for a small shack, more for slum homes. A 21-year-old from Mdantsane who dropped out of school after having a baby now lives with her boyfriend in a tiny bedroom in a house on De Villiers Street for which they pay R900 a month. The only visible items in their room are a single bed, a prima stove and clothing hanging on the wall.

The house has subdivided rooms and a filthy bathroom which tenants don't even bother to use any more.

Owner of the house Dave Vallabh said there was not much he could do to stop his tenants from bringing in squatters because he wasn't always around.

"I told the guys not to bring other people into their rooms because they are only meant for one person," he said. "I explained that the more people that live there, then more service will be required to fix the house, which costs me a lot."

Down the road is the notorious Nahoon View Road.

Corrugated iron shacks accommodating an ever-growing number of people desperate for accommodation have been erected at just about every second or third house.

There is no electricity in some of them and people use candles for light. There are also no toilets in some of the houses so people urinate outside on the grass.

BCM, however, appears unaware of the scale of the problem.

Spokesperson Samkelo Ngwenya said: "Like any of our ratepayers in all our suburbs and townships, Southernwood residents deserve to be living in conditions that are safe and healthy in a sustainable environment. Hence, it is disturbing to be confronted with such allegations.

"I have made the relevant directorates aware of this, and I am awaiting a comprehensive report."

Ntsaluba, G. 2009v. 'Reporting from an illegal slum.' Published on 21/11/2009 p.6

After running a series of articles this week in the print and online versions of the Daily Dispatch about a government official who was exposed for running a property empire of illegal slums around King William's Town, the Dispatch can now reveal how the investigation was put together.

Nompiliso Yekela, a clerk in the Premier's Office, emerged as a slum queen.

We discovered that she pretends to be a street hawker as a front for her empire – seven houses, six of which have been converted into boarding slums that are crammed full of people paying high rent for small rooms.

She makes over R80 000 a month packing dozens of people into her suburban properties, breaking local by-laws – and in the process destroying the fabric of entire neighbourhoods.

Dispatch reporter Gcina Ntsaluba tracked her down and spent a month in a house owned and managed by Yekela.

This is his personal account of the investigation process.

As a reporter, it was quite challenging doing this story because it was an undercover operation.

The story required that I go undercover and be physically based in one of her properties by pretending I needed accommodation for a month.

This was the best way I could tell the story because it's not just about the overcrowded houses but it's about the people living in them as well.

It took me about a week to locate Yekela. I asked her if she had any rooms available during September.

She said "Yes" and we agreed to meet in town, outside Jet Mart clothing store, the following week after office hours.

When I got there, Yekela was sitting on a chair by the entrance selling sweets and cigarettes pretending to be a hawker.

But this was just a front, as I discovered later, for her other business, the property empire that's worth more than R6 million.

I paid Yekela R1 200 for rent and gave her a deposit of R600 which she returned after I moved out.

The money was deposited into her company, called God's Creation Investment, of which she is the sole director.

The house that I lived in at 6 Pottinger Street has 11 rooms that are occupied by about 20 people.

I stayed in an outside room which had nothing, literally, not even a light bulb for me to read by at night.

I made myself comfortable and bought a small mattress and a duvet to keep me warm at night.

Within days I started making friends with the four guys who lived in a single room next to mine.

They knew everybody in the house and through them I gained access to the other people.

It turned out to be quite a mix of people.

Some were college students, government workers and unemployed women who live with their husbands and children. I think this is what got to me the most – watching small babies being brought up under these dreadful conditions and being exposed to so many things.

What's worse is that their parents seemed to have given up hope of building a better and more respectable life.

Undoubtedly, the experience of living in a slum was highly valuable for my story and for me personally as well, because it gave me the opportunity to experience what it's like not to have a shower, a proper kitchen, a fridge, privacy in the bathroom ... so many other things that I take for granted.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Yekela is not the only slumlord around Buffalo City, there are many just like her who have not been exposed.

Ntsaluba, G. 2009w. 'Municipality to tackle the landlord issue.' Published on 21/11/2009 p.6

AS A result of this week's Slumlord exposé, Buffalo City Municipality (BCM) issued a statement saying the heads of the relevant departments had called a meeting to formulate a plan of action to deal with this problem.

BCM spokesperson Samkelo Ngwenya said they planned to take action against all perpetrators involved with unauthorised land use activities. "A meeting between the stakeholder departments (Legal and City Planning) is to be held to map the process plan." BCM's primary responsibility was to ensure that the accommodation needs of the people were met in a safe, healthy and sustainable environment.

***Slumlords* investigation**

Ntsaluba, G.2009u. 'Tenants talk about their life in Yekela communes.' Published on 20/11/2009 p.4

Former tenants of King William's Town slum queen Nompiliso Yekela have described how the government worker exploited desperate people and earned thousands of rands in the process.

Yekela, who works in the Premier's Office, was exposed this week by the Dispatch for running a slum housing empire.

Luthando Phangabantu, who lived at 48 Queens Road in King William's Town earlier this year, said he was glad Yekela was coming under scrutiny because he and his wife suffered tremendously while renting a room from her for R2 000 a month.

Phangabantu said the biggest reason they moved out of the house after five months was because of frequent – in fact, almost daily – electricity cuts.

"It was really bad because we could not cook supper at night or make food for the baby," said Phangabantu, who now lives in Ginsberg. "I sometimes used to come home late from work and there would be no food and we couldn't watch TV."

As a result of the electricity cuts, Phangabantu said their fridge broke down and their food spoiled. When the couple asked Yekela to fix their fridge she simply told them it was not her fault, and they should have insured it along with their other belongings, including his "underpants".

"She has no respect for others," said Phangabantu. "But when it comes to collecting rent money at the end of the month, she never misses."

Another former tenant at the Queens Road property, Sikumbuzo Mtshongwana, said the situation got so bad this year that tenants had to hire their own garden service and contribute money towards electricity because Yekela refused to buy it for them.

"She said we were using too much electricity and should stop lighting heaters in our rooms in winter. We asked her to give us back our money for electricity, which is included in the rent, but she refused."

Mtshongwana said when there was no electricity in the house, they had to eat bread for supper or sleep on an empty stomach.

He paid R1 550 a month for a single room which he shared with his wife and child. The family have since moved to Sweetwaters.

Others from as far as Port Elizabeth wrote to the Dispatch, saying Yekela pocketed a lot of money from other people's desperation.

The Dispatch estimated she earns about R80 000 a month from her illegal boarding houses in King William's Town.

"That lady deserves to be exposed because she has profited from other people's problems," said Andile Ngxingolo, who now lives in New Brighton.

"I was a student and very desperate for accommodation after I lost my place at res so me and my brother ended up renting a room from her at 4 Elliot Street," he said.

"We shared the house with Mozambicans and other people who were working as building contractors but we left on bad terms with her because she did not want to give us our deposit back."

The Dispatch attempted to contact Yekela for comment but she terminated the call immediately.

Ntsaluba, G. 2009ee. 'Slums: BCM In the dock.' Published on 18/11/2009

Buffalo City Municipality has done nothing to shut down illegal slums – despite numerous pleas from King William's Town residents. Correspondence in the possession of the Dispatch shows that BCM's legal division and council are aware of the problems. In a letter dated 6

July 2009 to Mxolisi Mlotana, head of BCM's legal services, DA councillor Annette Rademeyer said she had forwarded numerous complaints from residents to BCM, which were ignored.

"It is my experience that the legal department at Buffalo City Municipality are very tardy to act. I will usually start with the town planning department and other departments like electricity and health.

"These departments will do what they have to do and then refer the matter to the legal department for action when letters and notices are ignored. That's where the system comes to a grinding halt."

In a letter dated 10 September 2009 to the speaker of BCM council Luleka Simon, Rademeyer expressed her frustrations with the legal division for not taking action against perpetrators who continued to ignore warnings and flout municipal by-laws.

"Madam Speaker, I ask you to take urgent and decisive action against your staff in the legal department and get them to get off their backsides and do their jobs. It is simply unacceptable that these matters are allowed to drag on and on and on to the detriment of the health and sanity of ratepaying residents of this town."

After yesterday's exposé of Slum Queen Nompiliso Yekela, the Office of the Premier has spoken out in her defence saying no action will be taken against her because her "communes" are above board and that she declared her business interests.

Bhisho spokesperson Mzukisi Ndara said there was no need for the Premier's intervention since the clerical worker's business – she owns rental properties worth R6.265 million in King William's town – had not in any way conflicted with the interest of her work.

The statement did not say if the Premier was aware that Yekela was running an illegal empire in between doing her day job and masquerading as a street hawker in town.

"To the best of our knowledge all is above board on this matter. Ms Yekela did declare her business interests and therefore has followed the necessary procedures."

He denied Yekela uses State subsidies or State resources to run her business. "The last time she had a State subsidy was on her first house, which she finished in 2002," he said.

Some residents are not prepared to leave it there. Alida Jacobsz, chairperson of the King William's Town Accommodation Society, went so far as meeting with Deputy Director-General in the Office of the Premier, Nceba Adonis.

When the Dispatch contacted Adonis yesterday, he said he remembered meeting her and said the matter had been passed on to the anti-corruption unit.

BCM spokesperson Samkelo Ngwenya said the issue of unauthorised land usage among Buffalo City residents was receiving their full attention.

All property owners were expected to comply with zoning; failure to do so would constitute a contravention and legal action would be taken.

If a development conflicted with the primary use of the property, there were processes that should be followed including submitting a rezoning or departure application, or applying for council's special consent.

Ngwenya said the latest status report on some of Yekela's properties which had recently been inspected reveal the following:

- **Erf 2490, 6 Pottinger Street, KWT**:

Zoned residential, Zone 3; application lodged for rezoning to Residential Zone 6 to establish a residential building. Rezoning approval granted with conditions dated August 2008. Land Use Management wrote informing the owner of contraventions in May 2009, and is pursuing legal action.

- **Erf 2350, 48 Queens Road, KWT**:

Zoned Residential Zone 3. Owner given written notice in July 2009 to cease within 21 days. A follow-up inspection revealed unauthorised land use, BCM legal division taking action.

- **Erf 3219, 63 Wodehouse Street, KWT**:

Zoned Residential Zone 3. Owner served notice in July 2009 to cease operation within 21 days. BCM instituting a Fire, Health and Building Control investigation.

- **Erf 2943, 124 Wodehouse Street, KWT**:

Zoned Residential Zone 3; being monitored for unauthorised activity; none visible at this time. —

Ntsaluba, G. 2009s There are so many people that use the bathroom Published on 19/11/2009

I didn't even know that I'm staying in a house that is illegal," said 21-year-old Mongezi Ntsume from Butterworth, who first learned about his landlord's shady business operations in the Dispatch yesterday.

Ntsume, who lives at 6 Pottinger Street, said he had no idea that Nompiliso Yekela ran a network of illegal slums around King William's Town; he had come to accept his living conditions.

"I never thought that I would live like this but since I am away from home, I have learned to accept it because there is not much I can do to change things around here. I thought it was a normal thing to do," he said yesterday.

The office management student at Lovedale College said he had stayed in Zwelitsha with friends before he decided to move to town to be closer to the college.

After finding a place in Yekela's boarding house, Ntsume said he had to put up with a lot of things he was not used to – like sharing a bathroom with strangers and waking up early to take a bath before everyone else wanted to.

"You can wake up early for school and still be late because there are so many people that use the bathroom," he said.

His room was originally a lounge but has been converted into a bedroom, and is situated near the main entrance of the house.

The are five other rooms inside the house, occupied by 10 people including a family of four.

The only other washing facility available is an outside shower in a bad condition; it doesn't have hot water.

On most mornings he has to boil water on a stove or in a kettle so he can wash in his room, which he shares with a friend who also goes to Lovedale College.

"We support each other a lot because we both come from the same place (Butterworth), and we understand each other's situations.

"For an example, when I don't have money or food, he helps me out and I do the same for him," said Ntsume.

He said another downside to living in the house was that people's belongings tended to go missing.

"We have had our clothes stolen from the (washing) line before, and we found a person in the street wearing them."

On weekends, Ntsume said he liked going away to escape the madness that usually took place when the rest of the tenants held parties.

"I find it hard to get peace of mind here, and think about where I come from and what I want to achieve with my life, so on most weekends I leave."

He said his mother had never visited him since he arrived in King William's Town at the beginning of the year, but she was aware of his difficulties. "My mother knows that I'm squatting but there's nothing she can do about that; I just have to study hard and get out of here."

Ntsaluba, G. 2009t. 'Communes cause streets of despair.' Published on 18/11/2009 p.4

The quaint streets of King William's Town are losing their lustre to rowdiness, filth and increasing crime.

Just ask long-time resident Annette Rademeyer, a former Democratic Alliance councillor who was born and raised in "King" and has experienced its slow demise first-hand. Rademeyer, a feisty activist in her home town, attributed the decay to the proliferation of slum houses run by people like landlord Nompiliso Yekela.

Rademeyer said illegal communes decreased the value of neighbouring properties while bringing down the standards and image of the area.

"It also has a crime element attached to it because crime is happening more and more everyday," she said, which police confirmed to the Dispatch.

"This has a negative effect on our hospitality industry as well because when tourists come here they see these slums and will never come back again," said Rademeyer.

Being a councillor in Buffalo City, Rademeyer said she has handled numerous complaints from residents about the bad behaviour and unruliness that goes on in these communes.

Vices like people drinking in the street and having sex on the pavement are just some of the bad examples of anti-social behaviour Rademeyer has heard about.

With the influx of more and more people to urban centres, and a shortage of accommodation adding to the problem, the social fabric of King William's town was being eroded, said Rademeyer.

For homeowners living near the slum properties, this translates into excessive noise and uncontrolled filth. It also means the streets are turning into boulevards of broken dreams for ratepayers who are seeing their assets, paid for over the years, losing value.

Yesterday the Dispatch reported how Cindy and Johan Howes have been unable to sell their home for 18 months because nobody wanted to live next door to a slum.

Even police have testified to the breakdown in order as a result of the town's illegal hostels. Drunken brawls are commonplace, they said, and often degenerate into knife fights.

Police spokesperson Captain Thozama Solani said there has been an increase in urban crimes over the past few years in King William's Town and she cites migration from the rural areas as one of the reasons.

Solani said the most common crimes these days are street muggings and house break-ins which routinely take place in the Central Business District (CBD) and in nearby neighbourhoods.

"Residents phone the police all the time to complain about the loud noise and drag racing that people do on the streets.

"Others go out to drink in places like (taverns) and make a big noise when they come back,"

said Solani.

None other than Nceba Adonis, deputy director general in the Premier's Office, was personally approached in July about the urban decay resulting from illegal guest houses and communes.

So said the chairperson of the King William's Town Accommodation Society, Alida Jacobsz, who has been fighting tooth and nail to have the establishments closed.

Ironically, slum queen Yekela, who runs six such places of ill repute, works in the same department.

Jacobsz said she wanted all establishments to abide by the standards of the industry.

"We have picked up a lot of problems as far as accommodation is concerned. Our standards are going out of the door and this is doing the town a lot of harm," she said.

Slumlords expose by Andrew Trench

Today we break the first installment in a months-long investigation into slumlords in our area.

You will read elsewhere in our paper how our intrepid young reporter Gcina Ntsaluba spent months living in a house in King William's Town along with scores of other people, recording the experiences of life in one of these houses and reporting the impact of these slums on their immediate environment.

Our first in the series deals with King William's Town and it quite remarkable to see how one person's slum empire can so damage an area. The villain of this piece is not alone, and clearly there are many other unscrupulous individuals who are happy to tear apart the fabric of our neighbourhoods in return for fast and easy cash.

The spark for this investigation came from one of our community dialogue meetings in Southernwood earlier this year. At that meeting residents told us how the slums in the area were one of the primary causes of social decay and other problems in their area.

At that meeting, I made a promise to those attending that the Dispatch would investigate this and would name the culprits. Police officers at that meeting also told me privately that they agreed that these slums and the explosion of taverns in Southernwood were major contributors to crime there.

I like to believe I am a man of my word and do not make idle promises. The stories that you will read over the coming days will show you that we meant what we said at that meeting – even if pulling it all together took a little longer than we expected.

We are investigating the Southernwood aspect to this problem and plan to publish the results of that investigation next week.

I hope these stories will make a difference.

There is no reason for the authorities to look the other way when it comes to slumlords. The city is well armed with by-laws to root out these people and to stop their cynical exploitation of those desperate for a place to live.

Turning a blind eye to the activities of slumlords has the same impact on our city as not caring about the rubbish that litters our streets.

This newspaper has campaigned hard to ensure our city is cleaned up and we are heartened to see the positive responses emerging from City Hall on this issue. We hope they will respond with similar vigour to the slumlords issue.