BROADCAST MEDIA MONOPOLISTIC SYNDROME: THE MAJOR IMPEDIMENT IN THE USE OF RADIO FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ETHIOPIA

Jemal Mohammed

Department of Journalism and Communications, Bahir Dar University

ABSTRACT:

The airwaves of Ethiopia were virtually dominated by Radio Ethiopia (the national radio) for more than half a century. In the last eight years, however, the status quo has been changed. Most of the regional states of Ethiopia have been engaged in the establishments of local radio systems, believing that radio has an irreplaceable role in their struggle for sustainable development. This is the good news. The bad news is that the radio stations are under either the direct or indirect control of the incumbent ruling party, i.e. EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Party). This paper inquires to what extent the ruling party's monopolistic syndrome for broadcast media is an impediment especially in employing radio systems to support sustainability of development efforts in Ethiopia. Moreover, the author attempts to assess the basic arguments that are drawn related to broadcast media ownership and show that it is community ownership of radio that is most appropriate to use radio to support sustainable local development endeavours in the country.

Keywords: Radio, Ownership, Development, Community, Participation

INTRODUCTION

Scholars unequivocally articulate the advantages, importance and benefits of employing broadcast media, especially radio to support the development endeavours, such as in health, agriculture and education, of poor countries. Compared to other mass media (newspaper, TV, internet), radio has been applauded by many for being the best tool to enhance sustainable development efforts especially in third world countries, like Ethiopia, for several reasons. Relative to television and print, both its capital cost and running expenses are small (McLeish, 1994, p. 4). From audiences point of view, radio is the most affordable and accessible medium (Fraser and Estrada, 2001, p. 1; Servaes and Malikhao, 2007). Radio is ubiquitous medium (Coldevin, 2003, p. 11) which "transcends literacy barrier" (AMARC, 2007) and is often "the preferred medium in rural settings" (Mefalopulos, 2008, p. 146). Actually, radio "is the most common electronic communication technology used by global poor populations" (McPhail, 2009, p. 135).

On the one hand, it is clear that farmers' genuine participation has a determining factor in achieving sustainable development goals in rural areas. "Internationally, emphasis is being placed on the challenge of sustainable development, and participation is increasingly recognized as a necessary part of sustainable development strategies" (World Bank cited in Mefalopulos, 2008). On the other, genuine participation of a given community can be secured as long as it is possible to establish a communication system that is accessible and affordable by the poor and marginalized. As a matter of fact, "Meaningful participation cannot occur without communication" (Mefalopulos, ibid.). The role of a communication system is to create a dialogue "which allows the sharing of information, perceptions and opinions among the various stakeholders and thereby facilitates their empowerment, especially for those who are most vulnerable and marginalized" (Tufte and Mefalopulos, 2009). The main goal of a participatory communication system is, therefore, to "extend the fruits of development in a sustainable way to all the citizens of the developing world" (Stiglitz cited in Dasgupta 2009, p. 160). As sustainable development is inconceivable without the real participation of the major actors that demand effective communication, effective communication is unlikely to be possible without a mass medium, such as radio especially when preponderances of the actors are framers.

Radio is the ideal mass medium to reach the mass people especially in the settings of Ethiopia, where the majority of them live in rural areas. Based on this assumption, from 2005 to April 2013, 19 radio systems were established in Ethiopia owned by either Regional States or various groups of communities. Though belated, it can be taken as a good beginning to have these all local radio stations within 8 years time (EBA [Ethiopian Broadcast Authority], 2013).

To use the broadcast system effectively and efficiently, however, the issue of ownership urges a serious consideration simply because radio "Ownership is important for sustainability and participation" (World Bank, 2007). For radio systems that envisage to serve the society as a means of development in an effective and efficient way, "The issue of who owns the media, and how much of it they own, matters" (Doyle, 2002, p. 6) is a very crucial one that needs to be answered. As there is a strong relationship between participation and sustainable development there is a strong relationship between participation and media ownership (World Bank, ibid.).

Though most of the regional states[1] of Ethiopia have been aggressively involved in setting up radio stations with the pretention that they will be employed to assist development efforts of their respective regions, the author would like to argue that state owned stations are not the right option to use radio in an effective and efficient way for sustainable

---

[1] Three regional states, i.e. Afar, Beneshangul Gumuz and Gambella, do not yet establish their own radio systems. The regions have four things in common: they are homes for pastoralists and found in the marginal border areas; they are the most backward and the lowland areas of the country (Jemal, 2013, p. 52).

development purposes in the country. Since the Ethiopian government or the ruling party (EPRDF to be precise), has a monopolistic syndrome especially in the ownership of broadcast media, these stations are unlikely to be successful. Thus, the author would like to argue that community ownership of the radio system is most suitable to support local sustainable development efforts in Ethiopia.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL RADIO FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable Development and Strategies of Radio

With relation to sustainable development, there are at least two major perspectives, i.e. Western and Eastern perspectives. According to the Western perspective, sustainable development is "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (the Brundtland Commission cited in Servaes and Malikhao, 2007). On the other hand, the Eastern perspective believes that "The main core of sustainable development is to encourage and convince human beings to live in harmony with their environment, not to control or destroy it. If humans have been socialized correctly, they will express the correct attitude towards nature and the environment and act accordingly" (ibid.).

It is unarguable that in either of the perspectives the road for sustainability is inconceivable without the active participation of the people which demands effective communication that leads to empowerment. On the other hand, effective communication among the public especially in a developing country requires a mass medium that is affordable and accessible for the majority of the audiences. For instance, radio is the most important medium to reach the mass people especially in the settings of Ethiopia, where majority of them live in rural areas. Actually radio is "the prime electronic medium of the poor because it leaps the barriers of isolation and illiteracy, and it is the most affordable electronic medium to… receive in" (Fraser and Estrada, 2001, p. 1). Radio's cheapness can be one of the main reasons to attract a substantial audience, particularly in the rural areas. "Radio is much more pervasive, accessible and affordable" (Servaes, 2008).

Thus, it is a good idea to discuss strategies of utilization of radios in rural education and development which has been identified by McAnany (cited in Moemeka, 1994, p. 127-136) so that to delineate the extent of the use of the medium for sustainable development.

Open Broadcasting: In this strategy, radio messages are sent to "an unorganized audience". The "approach leaves the target audience forgotten while programs are being planned; remembered just before the program go on the air; and forgotten again as soon as the programs have been broadcast" (ibid.). There are three basic problems that are related to the use of this strategy for sustainable development. Firstly, the type of radio programs and their contents are decided, planned, and broadcasted by journalists. There is no listeners' participation and involvement. Secondly, it has not room for the consultation of various stakeholders, such as governmental and non-governmental agencies, who are engaged directly in sustainable development endeavours. Thirdly, guidance is unavailable at the reception end. The strategy follows "a *giver-taker pattern*, where radio broadcasters (educated elite) are virtually taken as not only the sources of information, knowledge and wisdom but also the givers while audiences are considered as takers" (Jemal 2012, p. 30-31).

Instructional Radio: Unlike the open broadcast strategy, instructional radio targets an organized learning group, "with someone able to supervise and direct as well as elicit feedback". This strategy is in a better position to secure listeners participation though its implementation, especially on a wide scale is very challenging simply because it demands a

relatively high investment in the area of transport, personnel, etc. "Tanzania has been able to operate the strategy fairly successfully because… it is a relatively compact country, and… the government places a very high priority on rural community education" (Moemeka ibid.).

Rural Radio Forum: It is a strategy where a regular weekly radio programs, often fifteen to thirty-minute, are presented to rural audiences formed into listening groups. The groups listen to the radio broadcast; then, under the guidance of a group leader, make discussions and decisions on the main points that are raised in the radio program. Thus, one of the advantages of the rural radio forum is "the follow-up of a radio message with localized discussion and decision ensures positive commitment to agreed-upon decisions and subsequently to social change" (ibid). McAnany argues that, "The combination of a message carried to many groups by a mass like radio, then localized by discussion in small groups and guided to a group decision conforms closely to existing theories of communication and social change" (cited in Moemeka).

The second advantage of the forum strategy related to the outcome of the participation. "[M]embership in the group helps to expose the participants to information important to the rural communities, and this turns such individuals into opinion leaders whose views would tend to be respected in the community." Rural radio can have this type of effect on nonparticipants and it ultimately "leads to changes in attitudes, behaviors, and practices" (Moemeka, ibid).

Third, forums often send back reports and messages to the radio station. Because of this feedback, which is virtually absent in the arena of mass media, is ensured. Finally, "the forum strategy is based on the conviction that rural community development must essentially be the duty of the rural people themselves and should not be dropped on them from above". The localized discussions and decisions "ensure that the people are put in a position in which they can be the subject and object of their own development" (ibid.). Rural Radio Forum is, therefore, a good alternative to use radio in order to assist sustainable development, which entails genuine participation of farmers in developing countries, such as Ethiopia.

Radio Schools: This strategy uses radio for rural community education. Illiterate adults are organized into small listening/learning groups meeting in houses. That is the "schools". Its basic aim is, "to offer fundamental, integral education which goes beyond mere reading, writing, and cognitive skills and tries to change the passive and dependant attitude of people, creating a deepening of their sense of dignity and self-worth, and turning them into 'new men and women'" (ibid.).

Radio Schools is the most widespread strategy which has been used in Latin America. Its application is often limited to literacy and basic education leaving out "almost completely the political, social and physical developmental aspects of rural problems" (ibid.). It is, therefore, unlikely to be essential communication strategy as long as core issues and necessary conditions for sustainable development, such as population and development, food security, species and ecosystems, urban challenge, energy and industry (Servaes and Malikhao, 2007),) are not appropriately addressed through the radio broadcast.

Radio and Animation: Under this strategy, radio programs have to play a role in defining, but not suggesting, solutions to the people's problems. After listening to radio programs, the participating groups "discuss the problem further… and subsequently eliciting some decision". Some of the underlying assumptions of the strategy include the following: problem definition and its solution must not be imposed from outside rather they have to come from inside, i.e. from the

local community; "The social animator is to be as closely identified with the local community as possible"; feedback from the community is a vital means because community participation and social action is the goal (Moemeka, 1994).

One of the weaknesses of the animation strategy springs from the slowness or even inability of many rural communities to organize themselves without any support from outside. The second problem or weakness is related to the manipulation of people's participation by local officials (ibid.).

Local Radio Strategy: After analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the five radio strategies, discussed above, Moemeka has suggested an alternative strategy, which he called it "*Local Radio Strategy" that* combines the advantages, qualities and strengths of some of the strategies. Moemeka elucidates its role; "[The local radio strategy] should aim at improving the lot of the rural people in their totality – make them literate, widen their horizons, raise their aspirations realistically, point to their problems, create in them the willingness to find solutions to these problems and imbue them with a sense of dignity and self-worth" (ibid.).

To sum up, radio is the most appropriate medium for developing countries, like Ethiopia, where the preponderant of the population is illiterate farmers and pastoralists while sustainable development is the principal goal assuming that listeners' real participation is ensured. On the other hand, listeners' genuine participation can only be ensured as long as radio ownership is in the hands of the people or communities. "Ownership is important for sustainability and participation. People empower themselves through ownership, and there is a strong relationship between participation and ownership" (The World Bank, 2007).

BROADCAST MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL: RELATIONSHIP AND PATTERN

The Relationship

Is there a direct relationship between media ownership and control? Murdock (cited in Williams, 2003, p. 83) identifies two approaches that can help to understand the relationship between media ownership and control. According to him, in the realm of media ownership, there are two types of relationships; he labels them as *instrumental* and *structural*. "In its most crude or vulgar form, instrumentalism focuses on 'conspiracy and direct intervention'" (Williams, ibid.). Thus, according to instrumentalism, the relationship between ownership and control is an automatic one, i.e. there is a direct control. Here, it is not the radio reporter, producer or in short editorial board that decides which information has to reach the public. Rather proprietors and managers conspire "which person, which facts, which version of the facts and which ideas shall reach the public" (Murdock cited in Williams, ibid.).

In the cases of structural approach, on the other hand, ownership and control are discussed in the context of the "mode of production or political economy and the limits it places on the choices and actions of press proprietors and personnel, whatever their origins, social connections or personal commitments" (Murdock cited in Williams, ibid., p. 84). Thus, structuralists examine the way the activities of media owners, controllers and journalists as well as the pressures under which they work are shaped by economic structures. They analyse how the general dynamics of media industries and capitalist economies limit the policies and operations of corporations (Williams, ibid.).

The two approaches, i.e. *instrumental* and *structural,* are important to understand the relationship and control that exists in state/public and commercial media, respectively. But they are not helpful to understand the relationship between ownership and control that exists within media that are owned and run by the people themselves such as community media, which are not under the direct command of the owners (state media) or economic structure (commercial media).

Whether the relationship between media ownership and control is direct or indirect, no doubt about the fact that ownership of media offers power. McQuail (1994, p. 162) asserts that "Fundamental to an understanding of media structure is the question of ownership – who owns and how the powers of ownership are exercised". Since information by itself is a source of power, the power that is obtained from broadcast ownership can extend to determine the nature of information that has to be aired. "Information is now called 'power' like money and authority" (Shmykova, 2012). McQuail argues that "The belief that media ownership ultimately determines the nature of media is not just a Marxist theory but virtually a common-sense axiom" (ibid.).

Thus, first and foremost, ownership of a broadcast firm or a radio station unarguably offers power that can be exercised within the realm of the medium. Secondly, as many assume, a broadcast system can be used not only to inform and tell the truth, but also to obscure it and even to disinform the public. As there are media, there is ownership, as there is ownership there is influence that might lead to bias and manipulation. Watson (1998, p. 13) argues that "Communication has the power to define, persuade, inform and to disinform. An analysis of communication at the level of community and nation is obliged to recognize that truth is no necessarily separated from falsehood". Thirdly, media can deliberately work to defend and safeguard the interests and ideologies of their creators simply because there is a direct relationship between media structure and content.

For instance, as Barnett (2004, p. 14) assures, "It is hardly coincidence that in 2003, every one of Murdoch's 179 newspapers around the world supported the war on Iraq and are noticeable for their generally pro-American stance". Even if the owners do not instruct their media personnel to operate in support of their interest or ideology, they at least make some arrangements so as the media might run in agreement with their view. "Media owners make their views felt in subtle ways either directly or through their choice of senior managers and commissioning editors who do their bidding. Decisions are taken to further an editorial approach which is consistent with the owner's view of the world" (ibid., p. 17-18).

The Pattern

According to Buckley, Duer, Mendel, and Siochrú (cited in Mefalopulos, 2008, p. 81) mass media that are operating within a given country can be classified into three groups: *private, public,* and *community.* McQuail (1994, p. 162) for his part classified media ownership into three categories: *commercial companies, private non-profit bodies* and *the public sector.* Likewise, Fraser and Estrada (2001, p. 8) classify ownership of the broadcast media (radio and television) into three general categories: *public-service broadcasting, commercial* or *private broadcasting* and *community broadcasting.* In short, private or commercial media/broadcastings are most of the time run by companies and their purpose is mainly making profit. Public media/public-service broadcasters, on the other hand, are owned and run by the public or government entities, whereas community media/broadcasters are owned by certain group of communities within a society.

Fraser's and Estrada's classification entails the scope of control that exists in the arena of the broadcast media. It would be a good idea to discuss the contentions in relation to each pattern of broadcast media, especially radio, ownership and control with some detail so as to spell out the extent of power and control that is exercised within the scope of the three proprietorships. It is also crucially important to analyse the location of radio ownership and control in the context of the classical theories of the press.

Commercial Radio

Commercial or private radios are owned and controlled by private individuals or by commercial enterprises and provide programs that are designed primarily for profit from advertising revenue (Fraser and Estrada, 2001, p. 8). In the arena of commercial radio, media materials are considered as commodities. O'Sullivan (2000, p. 193) maintains "broadcast programs are regarded as commodities to be produced, sold and distributed primarily for profit by private, competing companies and advertisers". On the other hand, around the globe, there is almost no country today that is not reached by one or more private commercial media either through liberalization of broadcast licensing or through satellite services. These media can contribute a lot by providing more and more choices. But the drawback is that "they tend to pay little attention to the needs and concerns of the poorer sections of society" (AMARC, 2007).

When proposing mass media as one of the most important components for modernization or social change, according to Waisbord (2008), modernization theory overlooked the issue of media ownership and control. Thus, pro-urban and powerful interests controlled radio broadcasting systems which were supposed to promote development efforts within a given country. Waisbord insists that "The media were not interested in championing social goals or helping underprivileged populations but in transmitting entertainment and trivial information."

Even in developing countries, the ownership of radio broadcasting is becoming concentrated in the hands of private individuals or commercial companies from time to time. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for instance, more than 85 percent of radio stations are privately owned and cultural and educational radio stations make up only 7 percent of all regional channels (Truglia, 2008).

The main driving motive for commercial media organizations is profit. Since commercial media organizations are often strive to attract the maximum possible audience so that to sell them for advertisers, they are frequently obliged to compromise media content and tend to present trivial information such as sensational materials. Owing to this, as Rosenberg (2008) maintains, the real customers of a commercial media organization are not its readers, viewers or listeners rather it is advertisers. Rosenberg goes to comment: "This brings pressure to shield advertisers from views they do not like, to avoid complicated or expensive stories, and to avoid content that does not attract the maximum possible audience at any given time".

In a commercial radio almost everything is produced to make money. Even the news, which is expected to be factual, unbiased, fair and balanced, has to be marketable. "In a market-driven news environment there is a discrimination against news that cannot be 'sold', resulting in a distorted presentation of events to make them more marketable" (Thussu, 2000, p. 250).

When it comes to the theoretical framework, its foundation was laid by libertarianism or free press theory – a theory which "is based on the right of an individual, and advocates absence of restraint" (Suresh, 2003). Though the libertarian theory played a significant role to liberate the press from political censorship and to allow the free expression of ideas, it led to the monopolization of private media (Bold, 1994) which also paves the way to exert influence on media content and then people's view of the world. As it is defined by George Orwell, libertarianism is "allowing people to say things you do not want to hear" (cited in Suresh, ibid). Thus the other limitation of the theory is that if offers power without any social responsibility.

In short, from the above discussion it is clear that commercial radios are virtually less important to be employed as means of social development. A study conducted on the use of two Ethiopian commercial radios (Radio Fana and the Voice of Wayane Tigray) for development shows that the role played by the two broadcasters for the development of one of the regional state of Ethiopia, i.e. Afar, is inadequate, though the Regional State has paid more than 3.6 million Birr per annum for more than a decade for the production and transmission of development programs (Jemal, 2011, p. 252).

State Radio/Public Service Broadcasting

Here, unlike commercial radio, the nature of ownership is not straightforward. Public ownership can take many different forms. It ranges from direct state administration to elaborate and "diversified constructions designed to maximize independence of decision-making about content". The public service idea can include "universal service diversity, editorial independence, social responsibility and accountability, cultural quality and identity, public financing and/or no-profit operation" (McQuail, 1994, p. 63, 127).

From the early days of radio in the 1920s, leading thinkers were considering radio as wonderful tool for expanding culture, education and information as well as for improving societies. According to the perspective of this thinking, the mass media, including radio, could not be allowed to operate primarily on commercial basis. Colonization was one of the main causes for the spread of broadcasting technology in Africa and Asia. First public service radio, then after television served the interests of the colonizing powers and after decolonization the newly independent national regimes rather than the general public for whom they were originally established. Because the regimes fully realized that information is power, they completely controlled the broadcast media and used them to consolidate their power. Even today, many governments are still against the idea of giving up their monopolistic control of the broadcast media (Fraser and Estrada 2001, p. 12; Wessberg, 2008).

In this type of ownership, because the government is an owner, undoubtedly it "…is interested in affecting publics and building understanding of its policies" (Shmykova, 2013). There is no doubt that radio systems owned by states, especially in Africa, have served the nations of their respective country by promoting national unity, cultural diversity and even social development activities. When one weighs the roles played by the radio system, especially to enhance development against their gigantic capacity, however, it becomes clear that their broadcasts were highly devoted to serve the political advantages and ideological orientations of the rulers (Birhanu, 2009, p. 4; Jemal, 2011).

One of the prominent examples for public service broadcasting (PSB) has been the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation). John Reith was the first general manager who was considered by many as the architect of "public service broadcasting". He argued that educating and informing the public had to be the main duty of public service broadcasting. Nevertheless, as Stevenson (1995, p. 62-3) comments; "The defense of these norms became entangled within a cultural strategy that sought to impose an elite high culture on a diverse national community. Since Reith's time a multitude of excluded voices have criticized the BBC for imposing a certain version of Englishness upon the audience".

Even if there are some public service broadcastings that operate with independent governance and editorial arrangements, many of them are not still sufficiently independent of the government. "Instead of truly serving the public interest they remain the instrument of the government in power. Instead of dialogue with their audience they maintain a one-way mode of communication" (AMARC, 2007). Because of these, the public-service broadcasting media are used mainly to talk *to* the people rather than *with* the people; neither they are used by the people themselves to talk with each other. While their structure of ownership is characterized as elite-centered, their distribution, particularly in developing countries reflects a pattern of pro-urban concentration and bias (Adesonaye, 2008).

With regard to the theoretical framework, authoritarian theory is applicable, here. According to this theory, even if they are not under the direct control of the state, the media had to follow its bidding. Suresh (2003) goes on to comment "The world has been witness to authoritarian means of control over media by both dictatorial and democratic governments".

In general, either the radio is organized under the direct control or not, i.e. in the name of public service broadcasting, the followings are the major reasons that lead to the misappropriation of radio systems in developing countries that are supposed to fully support efforts which have been made to achieve sustainable development:

Undue interference and propaganda - Because "the media have never been either separate from or independent of the forces which create them and which in turn they shape and influence" (Watson, 1998, p. 15), even those public radio systems that often claim for being independent are susceptible to interferences that are likely to come from those who created them. They are, after all, working within institutional frameworks in which they operate and serve as forms of *cultural apparatus*. Since the mass media are part of the machinery of state or of powerful interest groups within the state (ibid.), public radio systems are very likely to be manipulated in order to use them as a propaganda tool not to mention the state owned ones. Souleymane and Kadiatou (2006, p. 139) argue that "We frequently find that broadcasts reflect the viewpoint of the elite rather than that of the majority."

Media manipulation is a critical problem especially in developing countries where the mass media, especially radio stations are highly expected to play an enormous role in the processes of development endeavours. Of course, there was a time where mass media were assumed to be a neutral force in the process of social development. But this did not happen simply because the media themselves are the products of social, economic, political and cultural conditions of a given country (Thussu, 2000, p. 58). Thussu contends further: "In many developing countries economic and political power was and remains restricted to a tiny, often unrepresentative, elite, and the mass media play a key role in legitimizing the political establishment. Since the media had, and continue to have, close proximity to the ruling elites, they tend to reflect this view of development in the news".

Over-centralization of power - The problems, which have been mentioned above, seem more critical in Africa than in any place in the globe simply because most of the radio systems are owned and excessively controlled by governments. Owing to this, there is an over-centralization of mass media power in the hands of the governments. Though theoretically, government ownership should create radio systems that provide the lion's share of emphasis for government-led development agenda, operationally, however, the ownership structure has forced the mass media "to pursue personal 'political' agenda of government officials" (Onwumechili and M'Bayo, 1995, p. 66-67).

In such environment, it is unquestionable that the radio system can be manipulated by self-serving politicians and have paid excessive amount of attention by producing self-serving programs – which are called "protocol news" - on government officials. The third world media are frequently flooded with protocol news. Though Rogers, in one of his major studies, tried to show as if the mass media or radio broadcastings in developing countries were mainly used to carry pro-development messages, his assumption has been widely challenged (Wete, 2008, p. 40-41; Onwumechili and M'Bayo, 1995, p. 67). Watson asserts that "Historically the media have more often served as the voice of the powerful than of the people" (1998, p. 15).

Restricted journalistic freedom - As McQuail (1994, p. 131) points out a media theory for development focuses on achieving four goals: the primacy of the national development task, i.e. economic, social, cultural and political; the pursuit of cultural and informational autonomy; support for democracy; and solidarity with other developing countries.

As long as the priority is often given to these ends, only limited resources are allocated to the media by governments while journalists can have a restricted freedom. McQuail encapsulate the consequences: "The responsibilities of the media are emphasized above their rights and freedom" (ibid.).

One-way, top-down model of communication - As a matter of fact the communication model employed by the public or state radio is often a one-way, top-down model; the way of communication is more convenient for persuasion (to sale goods and services) and propaganda (to agitate political agendas) than for audience's interaction and dialogue. The communication model by its very nature limits the participation of the people in development activities. The message which carries the intended influence originates from the top or above and flows downwards to the people; and often not in the other way round. The communication process follows a vertical approach where message is produced and send by experts and professionals to audiences. Due to this, communication is not often between coequals.

Especially in developing countries though the purpose of public radio is to inform and create awareness within the community who are predominantly living in rural areas, communication is often between educated elite (journalists, professionals, experts, etc.) and the ordinary people (Baran and Davis, 2006, p. 173) who have different status and life style. Thus, the chance of attaining the purposes of the media will likely be significantly low since there are concrete problems with the way the message is 'communicated': *First*, there is no guarantee whether the message actually reaches to the audience. *Second*, virtually there is no immediate feedback. Thus, no guarantee whether the message is clearly understood by the intended audience. *Third*, the communication is not often between coequals as long as the sender "has more prestige, power, resources, expertise and authority than the receiver" (McQuail, 1994: 37).

That is why, the disappointments related to the top-down model of communication has led scholars to question about *who is communicating to whom*, *who controls the communication systems*, *in whose interests the messages are produced*, and *the communication systems are operated*. Some contend that this linear communication model has been employed by the ruling class to subjugate the masses. For those who are in position of power, the ready availability of information and knowledge is considered as a threat to their power.

Journalists' self-censorship - The other drawback related at least indirectly to state radio ownership is self-censorship. *Dictionary of Media and Communications* defines (Danesi, 2009, p. 265) self-censorship as an "act on the part of journalists to censor themselves because they are under pressure not to raise sensitive questions from either governments or the institutions that employ them".

Due to this, some newsworthy stories can be purposely avoided from the media scene simply because journalists assume that the stories are unlikely to be welcomed by the owner of the media. The Pew Research Centre in the USA, in association with the *Columbia Journalism Review*, conducted a survey on journalists to know how often and why they make self-censorship. The survey was conducted on nearly 300 US journalists and news executives. Rosenberg (2002) reports some of the basic findings: "About one-quarter of the local and national journalists say they have purposely avoided newsworthy stories, while nearly as many acknowledge they have softened the tone of stories to benefit the interests of their news organizations. Fully four-in-ten (41 percent) admit they have engaged in either or both of these practices".

Besides this, the contents of radio broadcasts are often influenced by the states that have the upper hand over the resources. Normally the media "always reflect the interests of those who finance them" (Altschull cited in McQuail, 1994, p. 126). This will have an inevitable effect on the agenda that has to be set by the media, i.e. on deciding what is

most important for audiences to know and/or discuss about. The radio stations would be obliged to set the agenda that is in line with the interests and views of the owner. Thus, "once that agenda is set", as Rosenberg (2008) states, "it is very difficult to rearrange, even with quite literally the best information in the world. Yet it is that agenda that frequently guides people's actions and priorities".

Community Radio (CR)

Tabing (2002) defines a community radio station as "one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community". Fraser and Estrada (2001, p. 8) for their part define community broadcasting as "a non-profit service that is owned and managed by a particular community, usually through a trust, foundation, or association." AMARC also describe it as "a 'non-profit' station, currently broadcasting, which offers a service to the community in which it is located, or to which it broadcasts, while promoting the participation of this community in the radio" (cited in Servaes, 2008, p. 26). The aim of community radio is, therefore, to serve and benefit that specific community and must rely primarily on the resources obtained from the society (Fraser and Estrada, ibid.).

The community can be a township, village, district or island. Regardless of where they reside, a group of people who have common interests can also be considered as community. Hence, community radio can be owned and managed by one group or by combined groups and run by people such as farmers, women, children, fisher folk, ethnic groups, or senior citizens. Owing to this, the high level of people's participation, both in management and program production aspects distinguishes community radio from other media (Tabing, ibid.).

The followings are some of the benefits of community radio that stem from its distinct characteristics and make it the most appropriate type of ownership for a radio broadcast system that is really committed to assist the attainments of sustainable development at the grassroots level:

Ownership of the radio system belongs to the community. Neither a state nor a private company owns community radios. As opposed to the conventional mass media, a community radio must be owned and controlled by community members themselves and run as a non-profit operation. Actually owning and controlling the means of communication is the basic idea of community radio. Contrary to the other types of mass media, it is a very essential medium which respects the communication rights of a community and allows the voices of the poor and marginalized to be heard (AMARC, 2007).

CR is a voice for the voiceless. Individuals are born to communicate. Community radio is all about people who have never been heard via mass media. It is about people who have social and economic concerns, critical problems and cultural issues but who are virtually excluded from the media landscape. Community radio serves the people whose right to communicate is not insured in the mainstream radio (public or commercial). AMARC (ibid.) points out: "The importance of voice and the ability to exert the right to communicate may not seem so important for those who have that right insured, but it can be the most meaningful social change indicator in communities that have never been heard".

As one observer puts it, when a national public radio says "*We know what's good for you*", community radio says, "*We want to determine ourselves what's good for us*" (cited in Walker, 2008). The local community are part of the public agenda setting process. Because community radio has to be driven by the needs of the community it serves, AMARC argues that it helps local community to participate in setting the public agenda. The medium, therefore, is vitally important for the people who are information poor. AMARC indicates that the community audio towers in the Philippines, for instance, "have changed the landscape of relations between small communities and local governments" (ibid.).

Community radio grants community members access to the means of communication as well as to information that are educational and developmental. Important local issues are point of discussions and villagers are given the opportunity to express themselves socially, politically and culturally. In doing so, community radio helps to place community members or villagers "in charge of their own affairs" (Tabing, 2002, p. 12). Their transmission may cover only a few miles, "but community radio stations are enabling isolated communities across Africa to voice their own concerns. On air, ordinary citizens discuss issues that are central to them" (Madamombe, 2005, p. 4). These can be various development related subjects such as gender relations, HIV/AIDS, farming tips and ideas for income generation.

CR is the main ally for sustainable development. According to Castello (2007, p. 21) a community radio that is operating in developing countries has a wide range of responsibilities and a paramount role in the processes of sustainable development. As Castello (21-22) goes on to list, community radio is;

- *A powerful tool for informing on topics those are crucial to rural livelihoods*
- *An agent of social change*
- *A tool for conflict management and conflict resolution*
- *A channel for expressing ideas and opinions*
- *An engine of democratization*
- *In a nutshell: rural radio is a development tool.*

In short, there is no a mass medium that substitutes community radio as long as the main purpose of the station is to support development activities that lead a given community to sustainability.

CR suits to the rural setting that are yearning development - Community radio has distinct characteristics that suit to the rural settings which are yearning development for decades if not for a century. Following are the characteristics of community radio that has been identified by Tabing (ibid.):

- *It serves a recognizable community.*
- *It encourages participatory democracy.*
- *It offers the opportunity to any member of the community to initiate communication and participate in program making, management and ownership of the station.*
- *It uses technology appropriate to the economic capability of the people, not that which leads to dependence on external sources.*
- *It is motivated by community well being, not commercial considerations.*
- *It promotes and improves problem solving.*

CR is highly participatory. Unlike the conventional media (state or commercial), it is not the radio that moves to the community; rather it is the community that moves to the radio. This is due to the fact that a community radio is owned and controlled by community itself. Community radio gives access to voices in the community and encourages diversity, creativity and participation. It provides a means for local communities to voice their own issues, concerns, cultures, traditions and languages. Community radio provides a crucial counterbalance to the increasing globalization and commercialization of the media. While transnational conglomerates are in hurry to strengthen their control of the global media landscape, local communities are struggling to create democratic media systems. Actually, "The expansion of CR is the result of the reduction of diversity of voices that accompany the formation of media conglomerates that accompanies the globalization processes" (AMARC, 2007).

CR is dedicated to the production of local programs. Unlike the other two forms of broadcasting, the public and the commercial, community radio is a non-profit service. Community radio stations are an important alternative to public and commercial broadcasting since they are dedicated to local programming, which is often neglected by the mainstream media. Since community radio is a social process where members of a community federate to design and produce

programs and air them, the outcome is often the broadcast of material that is unavailable elsewhere on the dial (Walker, 2008; Howley, 2008; AMARC, 2007; Vinod and Kanchan, 2007, p. 17).

CR allows farmers to become "little journalists". Community radio alters not only the media ownership which has been monopolized by economic and/or political elites but also media production which has been virtually controlled by media elites, especially by journalists to be precise. The power shift that is occurred in the area of ownership and management, production and broadcasting has ultimately altered the total mass communication process. Radio program is reported from the field, produced in the studio and broadcasted to audiences by the village people who are the poor and less educated (farmers, pastoralists or laborers). In other words, audiences can be involved not only as listeners and interviewee but also as interviewer (reporter), program producer and even newscaster. Community radio allows the poor to become "*little journalists*" by breaking the barrier between the professional radio elite and the ordinary people or farmers (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes, 2008, p 367). It is unquestionable, however, that the program would hardly fulfill the artistic production standards that have been delineated by the professionals, i.e. journalists. This might not be a reason for its being unpopular within the community as long as the judges are the listeners (Martin Allard cited in Fraser and Estrada, 2001, p. 7).

Thus, community radio paves the way for effective communication since the communication is often between "*little journalists*" and their fellow farmers, pastoralists or laborers. In other words, the communication is between the poor who have coequal basis - same traditional and cultural backgrounds. Melkote and Vallath (1994, p. 315) assure that "Communication on a coequal basis is ethically correct and practically more relevant and useful".

The door is open for two-way communication. Farmers produce a radio program about the development concerns of farmers, for listeners who are themselves farmers. In other words, listeners are not only receivers of information but they are also purveyors. As they listen to the radio station, they also speak through it. Community radio is the dearest mass medium for local communities as the proverb says "the nearest is the dearest". Due to this, the possibility is very high to employ community radio in a two-way communication as long as it is used effectively. Brecht argues; "Radio should be converted from a distribution system to a communication system … if it were capable not only of transmitting but of receiving, of making the listener not only hear but also speak, not of isolating him but of connecting him. This means that radio would have to give up being a purveyor and organize the listener as purveyor" (quoted in Vatikiotis, 2009).

Political setbacks: One of a noteworthy challenge in promoting community radio is directly related to the absence of appropriate legislation in some countries which would recognize community radio as part of the countries broadcasting scene. Due to this, some countries do not have adequately precise criteria that define what is and is not community radio (Gumucio-Dagron, 2008, p. 44). The absence of proper enabling legislation for the establishment of community radio can be used by governments to defend their broadcasting monopolies. As AMARC (ibid.) has stressed it, the most single principal barrier to community radio social impact is lack of proper enabling legislation: "The absence of a friendly legislation, the existence of media oppression and military threats are a generalized barrier to the development of community radio".

The other main obstacle in the development of community radio, according to Fraser and Estrada (2001, p. 15), springs from the attitude of governments related to national identity and unity. "[M]any governments, particularly in countries with a multiplicity of ethnic groups and languages, felt that national identity and unity would be strengthened through having a single broadcasting voice from the centre and through promoting a national language."

BROADCAST MEDIA OWNERSHIP IN ETHIOPIA: IMPEDIMENTS

At time of the Emperor (1930 - 1974): "The first airwaves came to Ethiopian ears from their native soil at the time of Emperor Haile Silassie in 1935" (Jemal, 2013, p. 43). Because Ethiopia has never been colonized, unlike most of African countries, the colonizers were neither the ownership of the radio system nor the one who introduced the use of radio for the country. Unfortunately, the establishment of the station coincided with the Italian invasion, which inevitably altered ownership and control of the radio system. Though the Ethiopian soldiers had damaged it before the arrival of fascist troops in Addis Ababa, the Italian had managed to reinstall, expand and employed it as a propaganda machine.

Ownership of the radio system returned back to Ethiopians (or to the Emperor to be precise) within five years since the invaders were compelled to leave the country. Not surprisingly, they in turn dismantled the broadcasting facilities. The largest radio broadcast system on Jimma Road (in Addis Ababa) left behind by Italians was restored. After some time, *Radio Ethiopia* started transmission from three stations, which were based in Addis Ababa, Asmara and Harar, in six languages (Negussie 2006, p. 9; Tadesse, 2007, p. 12).

After the new facilities installed in 1960, Radio Addis Ababa as the voice of Ethiopia, was enabled to transcend the limits of its home service program and introduced regular transmission of programs in French and English to West and North-West Africa and Western Europe; in Arabic to North Africa and the Middle East, and in Swahili to East and Central Africa. Thus *Radio Ethiopia* for the first time had able to transmit international broadcasts (MOI, 1966, p.19).

Apart from its expansion, however, radio broadcasting was not in a position to be used as a tool of social development. The Emperor employed radio broadcasting as an instrument of unification, "to help overcome the internal linguistic and ethnic divisions which geography has perpetuated over Ethiopia's long history of independence" (Negussie (2006, p. 10) while newspaper was employed as a special propaganda machine and important lobbyer for Ras Tefari Mekonnen (who later became Emperor Haile Selassie I). Negussie (ibid., p. 7-8) contends that "Using the newspaper, priests in their daily teaching and government officials in their speeches, had to praise Tefari Mekonnen and tell others of his greatness and kindness, wisdom and leadership, and that he had no comparison in his time." In short, at the time of the Emperor, since the government was an absolute, undemocratic monarchy the radio broadcasting system was in a position neither to exercise freedom of expression (Brook, 2000, p. 18-19) nor to serve as a means of development.

This is also true for television broadcasting. Though Television broadcast was first launched in Ethiopia on November 2, 1964, coinciding with the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, in practice it was employed as "an important tool in shaping Haile Selassie's personality cult" (Negussie ibid., p 11). Thus, EBC (Ethiopian Broadcast Corporation, then ETV [Ethiopian Television]) at its infancy had to work for its creator or proprietor than the majority of the people who deserves to be served.

At the time of the Socialist Regime (1974 to 1991): After the overthrown of the Emperor in 1974, Ethiopia was run according to the state socialist ideology for eighteen years. Though the regime was changed, the monopolistic control of the broadcast media continued which paved the way to employ radio and TV as the main propaganda tools. Brook (ibid., p. 19) comments: "Centralized command, control and censorship contributed negatively to the development of the public mass media. Broadcast played a primarily propaganda role, aimed at promoting national unity under state socialism." Though inconsequential, the radio system "…was also used for education purposes to promote literacy campaigns, health and farming" (ibid.). Virtually, there had never been any remarkable change or even improvement in the landscape of

Ethiopian mass media. The significant change was made only on the contents of the broadcast media simply because a change in a proprietorship has inevitably brought about a change in the ideology of the media (Negussie, ibid., p. 13).

Apart from shortage of skilled manpower, financial constraints, I believed that, too much ideological emphasis, propaganda and censorship were the major impediments in the use of radio broadcast for development in Ethiopia (ibid. 13-4) that stemmed from the type of ownership which is highly monopolistic.

At the Time of the EPRDF (since 1991): The incumbent ruling party (EPRDF) overthrew the socialist/military regime in May 1991. The existing constitution of the country, came into force in August 1995, declares freedom of the press as well as the prohibition of censorship: "Freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed. Freedom of the press shall specifically include the following elements: (a) Prohibition of any form of censorship; (b) Access to information of public interest" (*Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia*, 1995).

Abdi (2006, p. 32) argues that this period, 1991 onwards, is one of the events that have a unique place in the history of Ethiopian journalism and mass media because "…pre-publication censorship was outlawed…" and "…press ownership, which had been monopolized by government and political party for many years, was permitted to private citizens".

Owing to this, though numerous private daily and weekly newspapers and magazines were set up, it was only EBC and three radio broadcasting stations - Radio *Ethiopia*, *Radio Fana* and the *Voice of Wayane Tigray* - that dominate the airwaves of the country for more than a decade (from 1991 – 2005). *Radio Fana* is a commercial radio owned by the ruling party (EPRDF) through a business organization called MegaNet Corporation. The *Voice of Wayane Tigray* is also licensed as commercial radio, which was an underground radio station at the time of the Derg regime and employed as a propaganda machine by EPRDF. Currently it is stationed in Tigray Regional State and is affiliated to the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF) which is one of the member political parties of EPRDF. Short wave (SW) broadcast, which can have the potential to cover the entire country, is not allowed for commercial radios except for the two (Brook, 2000, p. 19; 30).

The Use of Commercial Radios to Legitimize the Political Establishment - It is clear that *Radio Fana* and the *Voice of Wayane Tigray* have got the privilege to broadcast their programs at national level for the last 22 years, which is not given for any other commercial broadcaster, simply because they have been affiliated to the ruling party - EPRDF. From this and their practical use, it is possible to infer that the two broadcasters are working in favor of the political ideology of EPRDF and function to legitimize its political establishment rather than operating independently as a commercial radio (Jemal, 2011). Thussu contends: "In many developing countries economic and political power was and remains restricted to a tiny, often unrepresentative, elite, and the mass media play a key role in legitimizing the political establishment" (2000, p. 58). The way shortwave signals are used in Ethiopia provides a substantiation of the existence of a strong interest on the part of the government to employ mass media as a propaganda machine as much as possible rather than as a means of development. It is also a proof that EPRDF has a very strong interest to control the flow of information in the Ethiopian media landscape: a monopolistic syndrome that favors virtually the rulers not the people.

After 2005, Regional States started to establish local radio stations. Up to April 2013, there were 25 radio stations that were operational in the country. From these, nine radio stations belong to state media; all the radio systems are owned by Regional States except *Radio Ethiopia* which belongs to the Federal Government. From the remaining radio stations,

eleven of them are community radios and five are commercial broadcasters (Jemal, 2013, p. 44; EBA, 2013). Thus, the number of bona fide commercial broadcasters till now is not more than three.

Government Public Relation Officers as the Sole Source of Information - The other problem is related to the way public relations communication has been used in the country. The Government "public relations departments are almost the only way to access government information" (Biniyam, 2006). The power of public relation officers has been reinforced by a proclamation which makes Government public relation officers the sole source of information for governmental organizations. "Any person who desires to obtain information shall present his request to the concerned public relations officer in writing or through electronic device, clearly identifying the information he seeks…" (Federal Negarit Gazeta, Proclamation No. 590/2008). But surprisingly, the proclamation is entitled as "*Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation*". Owing to this, the Ruling Party (EPRDF) often employs both national and regional radio systems and other mass media outlets (EBC, ENA, Walta) to build its public image and manipulate them for propaganda rather to support development efforts.

Lack of an ideal radio station for development - It is the other critical problem in the use of radio for development in Ethiopia. Though, *Radio Ethiopia* has still enjoyed widespread popularity within the majority of listeners nationwide (Ward and Ayalew, 2011, p. 26) for the simple reason that it was the only broadcasting system for more than half a century, it is still the monopoly of the existing Ruling Party where plural voices are hardly heard (Jemal, 2011). "Radio… broadcasting… remained almost entirely the preserve of the federal and regional states" (Brook, 2000). Thus, the other problem is related to taking *Radio Ethiopia* as a 'model' for public service broadcasting especially among the newly established regional radio stations; the probability is very high to take the bad model as good one. Research indicates that the state owned radio broadcasters, both federal and regional, have employed the Open Broadcasting Strategy (McAnany cited in Moemeka, 1994), which follows "a shot-in-the-dark approach" to radio programming (Jemal, 2013), which will unquestionably close the room to use radio broadcasts to support sustainable development efforts in the country.

The use of jamming to control information that flows to the country - Its monopolistic behavior forced the Ethiopian government to engage in jamming radio broadcasts that come from abroad, using the national language (Amharic), such as VOA[2] (the Voice of America) and DW[3] (Deutsche Welle), which is very unfavorable for the development of democracy in country. It is also worth mentioning that there is no any domestic private TV station in Ethiopia. On the other hand, the government has jammed ESAT (Ethiopian Satellite Television) which "was set up by a group of Ethiopian exiled journalists and pro-democracy activists to create alternative media outlet for the people of Ethiopia" [4] and a telecast that comes from Eretria[5]. Owing to this, Ethiopians are forced to listen to and view about the socio-economic and political activities of their country solely on EBC and Radio Ethiopia which virtually present the EPRDF version of the story. Thus, it is evidence that the government has a strong interest to make the state media - EBC and Radio Ethiopia - the sole sources of information for Ethiopians that stems from EPRDF's monopolistic syndrome especially in the cases of broadcast media. Herman and Chomsky (2006, p. 257) encapsulate: "In countries where the levers of power are in the hands of a state bureaucracy, the monopolistic control over the media … makes it clear that the media serve the ends of dominant elite". It is hard to anticipate the attainments of sustainable development in the country,

---

[2] '*Ethiopia admits jamming VOA radio broadcasts in Amharic*', (BBC, 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8575749.stm
[3] "*Ethiopian service jammed again*". (Deutsche Welle, 2012, http://www.dw.de/deutsche-welle-ethiopian-service-jammed-again/a-6498274
[4] "Ethiopia: EFJA [the Ethiopian Free Press Journalists' Association] Urges China to Stop Complicity in Jamming Satellite TV Transmissions" (2011, http://allafrica.com/stories/201106230066.html).
[5] "Ethiopia jamming Eritrean Television, knock out own satellite channel" (2012, http://www.eriswiss.com/?p=1029).

at least in the near future, since the pursuit of sustainable development needs "A political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision-making" (Servaes and Malikhao, 2007).

News agencies under the control of the government - EPRDF's monopolistic syndrome is not restricted to the broadcast media. Rather extends to other types of mass media or news outlets. News agencies can be a good example here. The only two news agencies that operate in the country are under state control - either directly (Ethiopian News Agency [ENA][6]) or indirectly (Watla Information Center[7]) (abdi, 2006, p. 40; Brook, 2000, p. 19).

Journalists' self-censorship - It is also another factor that can commonly hinder the use of radio broadcast from supporting development efforts effectively in Ethiopia. Getachew (2006) confirms that "there are both internal and external pressures affecting journalistic decisions, often forcing journalists to practice self-censorship in order to depict the ruling party positively and omit facts that are offensive to the ruling party."

The new newsroom culture - As the author knows from his journalistic experience, the new newsroom culture, which was emerged in the state media landscape in the last 15 years, is another challenge that has a deterrent effect on the use of radio systems for development in Ethiopia. This newsroom culture is called *buchie*[8], as it was coined by journalists themselves. *Buchie* is like a nickname given for money that is taken by journalists from an organization (nongovernmental or governmental), private company or even an individual (such as an investor) for favoring in their news coverage or other type of reporting. In most cases it is obtained in advance, based on either the demand of a journalist or the goodwill of an organization, in a form of per diem as a response to obtain good media coverage.

It is not as such arguable that *buchie* is part of the contemporary newsroom culture that has a negative influence in the processes of editorial decision making. At least three implications can be drawn about the state media scenario in relation to the practice of *buchie*: one, an event or activity will be reported not only because it has vital information but because journalists have managed to secure *buchie*; two, as long as *buchie* is secured, it is highly probable that the media report trivial information; three, there is no assurance whether the state media ignores some of the most vital information for the simple reason that *buchie* is not obtained.

Owing to all reasons that have been discussed, the incumbent Ethiopian government is not the right option to be a proprietor for radio stations which are supposed to serve mainly the development endeavors of the country that lead to sustainability at all levels of society. Community ownership of radio systems, which totally removes the monopolistic syndrome attached to the media landscapes of Ethiopia, is most suitable to support local efforts for sustainable development in the country.

Conclusion

"Despite widespread acceptance that the media can make a positive contribution to development, this is by no means assured" (AMARC, 2007). The reason why more often than radio broadcasting has not been successful in promoting development endeavours and attaining the intended social changes in Ethiopia is often related to the way the medium has been controlled and employed (Jemal, 2011). Because ownership matters, the contents of the media "always reflect the

---

[6] The *Ethiopian News Agency* (ENA), launched in 1942, is owned by the Federal Government. ENA, headquartered in Addis Ababa, has 15 main branch offices and more than 20 sub-stations in the major cities and towns of the country that are connected by computer networks (Abdi, 2006, p. 40).
[7] The only private news agency, *Walta Information Center* (WIC), was established in December 1993. It is owned by ruling party through the MegaNet Corporation. WIC is headquartered in Addis Ababa and has 16 branches in all nine Regional States as well as in Dire Dawa City Administration. On average having around 5480 hits daily or over 2 million hits yearly, WIC has a strong presence on the Internet (Brook, 2000, p. 19).
[8] *buchie* a new Amharic word coined by the journalists. The root word in Amharic, I suppose, is *mebocheq* that means to forcibly take something from somebody/something.

interests of those who finance them" (Altschull cited in McQuail, 1994, p. 126). As radio broadcasts are employed, which is also true for other media, to influence people's perspectives and/or shape their opinion, the contents of media are often influenced by the owners who have the upper hand over the resources. "… [T]he ownership and control of the media is identified... as an important factor in determining… the production of meaning in society" (Williams, 2003, p. 73).

In Ethiopia, much of the radio broadcasts (TV station totally) are owned and controlled by the state (either federal or regional). Though there are 3 privately owned radio stations (EBA, 2013), their transmission is limited only to the capital city – Addis Ababa. Besides the national radio (Radio Ethiopia), there are only two commercial radio stations (Radio Fana and Dimtse Wayane Tigray) that have a license to broadcast nationwide simply because they are affiliated to the incumbent ruling party. The two commercial broadcastings are actually employed to legitimize the political establishment and maintain the status quo (Brook, 2000; Jemal, 2011).

The state owned radio stations, in their approach, follow a *giver-taker pattern* (Jemal, 2011) - the 'traditional' linear, top-down approach - in which radio broadcasters (political and educated elites) are virtually taken as the only sources of information, knowledge and wisdom. Though the country has more than 80 ethnic groups and around 90 million people, the majority of Ethiopians are not lucky enough to discuss and debate freely about their social, cultural, political and economic concerns using radio waves. Because plural voices are hardly aired, Ethiopians are frequently left voiceless though this is against the Constitution, which declares freedom of the press and the prohibition of censorship. Due to this, *exclusion pattern* (Jemal, ibid.) is also operating in the Ethiopian state owned radio stations. "[I]t is true that state broadcasters often overlook or exclude the cultural, traditional and social realities of their people" (Moemeka, 1994).

Research indicates that the reason why more often than radio broadcasting has not been successful in promoting sustainable development endeavors and attaining the intended social changes in Ethiopia is often related to the way the medium has been controlled and employed. As long as state radio broadcastings are under the monopolistic control of the ruling party, the employment of such systems for sustainable development is highly unlikely to be successful in the country (Jemal, 2013). Firstly, both national and regional radio stations are used for state propaganda purposes following "a shot-in-the-dark approach" where listeners' real participation is virtually nonexistent. This makes very difficult to anticipate that the radio broadcast systems will play a considerable role for sustainable development of the country as long as there is no "A political system that secures effective citizen participation…" (Servaes and Malikhao, 2007).

 Secondly, it is evident that the ruling party's monopolistic syndrome is the major impediment in the use of radio for development at national and regional levels. It is obvious that the ruling party's monopolistic control nurture journalistic self-censorship so that to make the officials wrongdoings (corruption, misconduct, scandal, etc.) out of the public eye while the pursuit of sustainable development entails "An administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction" (Servaes and Malikhao, 2007).

Therefore, it is extremely desirable to have radio broadcasting systems in the country where their proprietorship is totally detached from state ownership so as to assist local development efforts effectively and efficiently. Owing to this, it is clear that community ownership of the broadcast media has to be encouraged. Community radio is the ideal medium to support sustainable development efforts of Ethiopia at regional or local level. Thus, those who (governmental, nongovernmental and civic organizations) aspire to employ radio broadcasting so that to support sustainable development endeavours in the country need to assist the establishment and sustainability of community radios. The road to sustainability is not promising to be successful as long as the government's monopolistic behaviour is not at least

minimized in a meaningful way and the voicelessness of preponderances continue to be the typical features of Ethiopian broadcast media landscape.

REFERENCES

Abdi Ali, (2006). *Private Newspapers* in *Ethiopian Mass Media Profile*, Addis Ababa: Population Media

Centre.

Adesonaye, F. (2008). On Mass Communication and Mass Incommunication in Nigeria, Available online. <http://digital.lib.

msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/pdfs/africa%20media%20review/vol4no1/jamr004001007.pdf>

Allafrican, (2011). "*Ethiopia: EFJA Urges China to Stop Complicity in Jamming Satellite TV Transmissions*", Available

online, http://allafrica.com/stories/201106230066.html

AMARC (2007). 'Community Radio Social Impact Assessment: Removing Barriers, Increasing Effectiveness'.

Available online, http://evaluation.amarc.org/evaluation.php

Baran, S. and Davis, D. (2006). *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Ferment, and Future*. 4th Ed.

India: Thomson Wadsworth.

Barnett, S. (2004). 'Media ownership policies: Pressures for change and implications', Pacific Journalism

Review 10 (2). Available online. <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/schools/media/staff/media-studies/barnett,-steven>

Biniyam Wubishet. (2006). *A Critical Study of the Treatment of Public Relations Information in*

Ethiopian News Agency. (Unpublished master's thesis). Addis Ababa University. Ethiopia

Birhanu Olana. (2009: 4). *Journalism in the context of Ethiopian Mass Media: Essays, Researches and*

Reflections. Addis Ababa: Camera Ready & Page Makeup Z Secretarial Service.

Bold, L. (1994). 'Media, Development and Democratization: A Research Project, Centre for Cultural and Media

Studies, Durban: University of Natal. Available online. <http://ccms.ukzn.ac.za/index.php?option=com content&task= view&id=517&Itemid=69>

Brook Hailu. (2000). **Ethiopia** in Lynne Muthoni Wanyeki et al, *Up in the Air? Analysis and trends in Five*

Countries, Zambia: Panos Southern Africa.

Carpentier, N. et al (2008). 'Making Community Media Work: Community Media Identities and their

Articulation in an Antwerp Neighbourhood Development Project' in Jan Servaes, (Ed.), *Communication for Development and Social Change,* UNESCO, Sage Publications: New Delhi.

Castello, R. (2007). '*Empowering rural communities through rural radio'* in Joachim

Hofer, Services for Rural Development Reader: Media for Rural Development, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Available online. <http://www.gtz.de/de/dokume nte/en-media-reader-2005.pdf>

Coldevin, G. (2003). 'Participatory communication: a key to rural learning systems', London: Earthscan.

Available online. <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/005 /y4774e/y4774e00.pdf>

Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia. 1995. Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing

Press.

Danesi, M. (2009). *Dictionary of Media and Communications*. USA: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

Dasgupta , S. (2009,) "Sonagachi Project: A Case-Study Set in India*"* in Thomas L. McPhail (Ed.) *Development*

Communication: Reframing the Role of the Media: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Doyle, G. (2002). *Media Ownership: the Economics and Politics of Convergence and Concentration*

in the UK and European media, London: SAGE Publications.

"*Ethiopian service jammed again*". (Deutsche Welle, 2012, http://www.dw.de/welle-deutsche-ethiopian-service-

jammed-again/a-6498274

EBA (Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority), 2013. http://www.eba.gov.et/

Federal Negarit Gazeta. (2008). *Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation*.

Proclamation No. 590/2008. Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press.

Fraser, C. and Estrada, R. (2001). *Community Radio Handbook.* UNESCO.

Getachew Dibaba. (2006). A Study of Source Consideration and News Selection in Ethiopian Television.

(Unpublished master's thesis). Ethiopia: Addis Ababa University.

Gumucio-Dagron, A. (2008). *Vertical Minds versus Horizontal Cultures: an Overview of Participatory Process*

and Experiences in Jan Servaes, (ed.), *Communication for Development and Social Change***,** UNESCO. New Delhi: Sage
Publications.

Herman, E. and Chomsky, N. (2006). A Propaganda Model, in Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M.

Kellner (ed.), *Cultural Studies: Key Works*: Revised Edition. USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Jemal Mohammed. 20013. *Challenges and Opportunities in the Use of Radio Broadcast for Development*

in Ethiopia: Secondary Data Analysis Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies, Volume: 3, Issue: 2,
April 2013.

_____ (2011). Use *and Potential of Radio for Development in Ethiopia: an Exploratory Study with*

Particular Reference to Afar Society. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). India: Andhra University.

Madamombe, I. (2005). *'*Community Radio: a Voice for the Poor, Better Local Communications Can Boost

Development Democracy' in *Africa Renewal,* Vol.19 no. 2, April 2005.

McLeish, R. (1996). *Radio Production***:** 3rd ed. Great Britain: Bath Press.

McPhail, T. (ed.). (2009). *Development Communication: Reframing the Role of the Media*. Malaysia:

Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

McQuail, D. (1994). *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. London: Sage Publications.

Mefalopulos, P. (2008). *Development Communication Sourcebook: Broadening the Boundaries of*

Communication. Washington DC: The World Bank.

Melkote, S. and Vallath, C. (1994). '*Operational Impasses in knowledge Sharing: Case Study Examples'*, in

Shirley A. White, et al, *Participatory Communication: Working for Change and Development,* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Moemeka, A., (Ed.), (1994). Communicating for Development: A New Pan-Disciplinary Perspective, State

University of New York Press: USA.

MOI. (1966). *Patterns of Progress: Mass Communication in Ethiopia*. Book V, Publications and Foreign

Languages Press Department. Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press.

Negussie Teffera, (2006). *History of the Ethiopian Mass Media and Literary Works in the Past*, in **Ethiopian**

Mass Media Profile. Addis Ababa: Population Media Center.

Onwumechili, C. and M'Bayo, R. (1995). *Structure and Functions of the Mass Media in National Development*

in Africa: Systematic Considerations in Peter Nwosu, Chuka Onwumechili and Ritchard M'Bayo (eds). *Communication and the Transformation of Society: a Developing Region's Perspectives*. University Press of America, Lantham, MD: USA.

O'Sullivan, T. (2000). *Public Service Broadcasting* in Dan Fleming, (ed.), *Formation: a 21st Century Media*

Studies Textbook. UK: Manchester University Press.

Rosenberg, B. (2002). **'**News media ownership: How New Zealand is Foreign Dominated', Pacific Journalism

Review 8, 2002.

Servaes, J. and Malikhao, P. (2008). *Development Communication Approaches in an International Perspective*,

in Jan Servaes, (ed.), *Communication for Development and Social Change*. UNICCO. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Servaes, J. and Malikhao, P., 2007, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO),

Communication and Sustainable Development: Selected Papers from the 9th UN Roundtable Rome

Shmykova, E. (2012). *Effects of Mass Media Ownership on Serving Public Interest*. University of

Georgia.

Souleymane Ouattara and Kadiatou Ouattara, (2006) '*From Information to Communication in Burkina Faso: The Brave*

New World of Radio' in Guy Bessette (ed*.), People, Land and Water: Participatory Development Communication for Natural Resource Management*, Earthscan International Development Research Centre. Available online. <http://www.idrc.ca/openebooks/224-4/>.

Stevenson, N. (1995). *Understanding Media Cultures, Social Theory and Mass Communication,* Sage

Publications: London.

Suresh, K. (2003). Available online. http://www.peoi.org/Courses/Coursesch/mass/mass2.html

Tabing, L, (2002). *How to Do Community Radio: a Primer for Community Radio Operators*, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): New Delhi.

Tadesse Zenaye, (2007). *Broadcasting in Ethiopia: Historical Development and Challenges* in *Broadcasting Situation in Ethiopia: Opportunities and Challenges*. Addis Ababa: Panos Ethiopia.

Thussu, D. (2000). *International Communication: Continuity and Challenge*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press Ltd.

Truglia, E. (2008). *'*Community radio gridlock, Legal obstacles plague Latin American and Caribbean community radio'. Available online. <http://www.amarc. org/in dex.php?p=Community_radio_desert>.

Tufte, T. and Mefalopulos, P. (2009) Participatory Communication: A Practical Guide, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / Washington, D.C.: The World Bank

Vatikiotis, P. (2005). *Communication Theory and Alternative Media*, in *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*. University of Westminster, London, Vol. 2(1): 4-29. ISSN 1744-6708.

Waisbord S. (2008). *Family Tree of Theories, Methodologies and Strategies in Development Communication*. Available online. <http://www.comminit. com/pdf/familytree>.

Walker, J. (2008). *Why Community Radio Does Not Need the Corporation for Public Broadcasting*. Available online. <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-277.html>.

Ward, D. and Ayalew, S. (2011). *Audience Survey Ethiopia 2011*. Electoral Reform International Services.

Watson, J. (1998). *Media Communication: an Introduction to Theory and Practice*, Macmillan. London: Press Ltd.

Wessberg, A. (2009). The World Communication and Information Report 1999-2000, Publics Service broadcasting. Available online. <http://www.unesco. org/webworld/wcir/en/report.html>.

Wete, F. (2008). **'**Mass Communication and Development: Impact Depends on Strategies'**,** African Council on Communication Education, *Africa Media Review* Vol. 3 No. 1. 1988.

Williams, K. (2003). Understanding Media Theory. Great Britain: Arnold.

World Bank, 2007, World Congress on Communication for Development: lessons, challenges, and the way Forward, Washington DC.

Z-Coms, 2009, Trends of Ownership and Control of Media in South Africa – Version 3.2, 15, June 2009

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr JEMAL Mohammed Haile is an Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Journalism and Communications in Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia.