

Alternative Media Political Messages in Addis Ababa (2005-2010): Content Analysis

By

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School of Journalism and Communication

Graduate Studies

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DEDICATION

To my mom Fantayie Asefa who passed away without seeing the successful accomplishment of my career while she had always wished to be triumphant and never hesitated to offer her support immensely.

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Abstract

Complete understanding of political communication entail looking at the context in which it is functioning. Considering contextual factors like culture, politics, economy, technology and history are very important to have a proper analysis. In countries like Ethiopia, cultural and historical factors have made alternative media consumption for political communication superior. This peculiar characteristic also comes out of the dominance of the oral tradition and the relative weakness of formal media institutions. Therefore, scholars suggest looking at the alternative media spheres to have a complete picture and understanding of the political atmosphere.

In view of that, this research has attempted to analyze the contents of alternative media political messages that have been communicated in Addis Ababa from 2005 to 2010, which address local political issues. To deal with this, the study employed qualitative content analysis research techniques. The data were collected through interviews and participant observations from different public areas. The collected messages were examined and categorized based on the themes, nature, forms, sources and the network and channels they employed to communicate in detail following narrative analysis method.

According to the findings of the study, election and governance are widely discussed political agendas in the alternative media sphere of Addis Ababa since 2005. Human rights, mainstream media and political parties are also among the important concerns of the public in the arena. Most stories discussed the failure in the current political system primarily. In messages which address elections, criticized the 2005 and 2010 elections as undemocratic. In addition, support and opposition for political parties are among the overriding pre and post election messages. The absence of good governance is the point of most governance stories. Regarding political parties, opposition and support for parties' political agendas and their leaders are in focus. The human rights stories pose violation against human life and lack of freedom of expression as a major failure in the political system. Similarly, the mainstream media, ETV, is criticized for its failure to serve the public and pursue truth on the political issues.

These stories disseminated information, critiques, commentaries, and politically challenging and mobilizing messages within 'secret' and established networks mostly with anonymous sources. Thus, the sources of most messages are not commonly locatable. On the other hand, the channels utilized vary from traditional words-of-mouth communication to new technologies like mobile phone. They appear in narratives as humorous tales, folk poems and popular songs incorporated Menezuma (Zakir), praise and curse verses (mirikatina ergeman), verses in graffiti and couplets.

Generally, the media's discussions are about perceived and/or real failures of the current political system. Thus it can inform about the panorama of what has gone wrong in the city's political arena. From these the government and different political actors can gain valuable information about a certain part of the society's perceptions on different political affairs of the time.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

This introductory chapter will give insight into the research undertaken by way of presenting such basic issues as: the background of the study, a statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the scope of the study subsequently. A definition of key terms also will be given at the end.

1.1. Background

According to the Political Science Dictionary (1973:69), political communication is understood as the transmission of message intended to contribute to political functioning. Communication has a central role in mediating the input and outputs of the political system. Political communication in particular contains in it any verbal, written, or paralinguistic communication about politics, as MacNair (2003:4) asserts. Media as a mediator helps political actors to communicate their message to the citizens (audience); citizens also transmit their message to the political leaders' via media. This is the reason why scholars such as Hyden and Leslie (2002:1) claim that the media, as communication channels, could shape the political process and political actors (especially politicians) could influence the media.

To understand any political communications, on the other hand, one must seek to consider multiple dimensions like culture, politics, economy, and technology (Hyden and Leslie, 2002). On the basis of Graber's (2004:45) conviction contextual factors make the political communication different in several environments. Accordingly his suggestion brings to our attention the idea that political communication studies must begin with observing how people are communicating in their context so as to come up with appropriate analysis.

In Africa, culturally, alternative media¹ have a more significant utilization and role in political communication than the mainstream media, which might not hold true for the Western world (Hyden and Leslie, 2002:24). This peculiar characteristic emanates from the dominance of the oral tradition and the relative weakness of the formal media institutions in Africa. The scholars argue in favor of alternative media, by explaining that political development in the continent should get inspiration from the informal means of communication, which are interactive, have dialogue and mass participation.

The political context of Africa also illustrates a lack of informational quality in the mainstream media as a reflection of government ownership and control (Hyden and Leslie, 2002:15). Many Africans believe that the mainstream media are not the free actors (mediators) of political communication; rather, they are instruments of the officials' propaganda. Having this in their minds, people try to create their own communication space in repressive media environments (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi, 1997, Hyden and Leslie, 2002, Spitulnik, 2002, Fekade, 2006). The communications can be in forms of 'radio trottoir' (sidewalk radio), folktales, jokes, graffiti, flyers, underground cassettes, internet listservs, slogans, rumors, mobile phone messages, etc., and they serve as alternative means of information exchanges. (Spitulnik, 2002:177, Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi, 1997:230).

The prominent scholars in the area, Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi (1997; 232), suggest that it is important to look at these alternative spheres because the medium has its own influence on what should be communicated. Let us have a look at their statements which is quoted below to comprehend the issue.

¹ Alternative media is also called small media, informal media, 'radio trottoir' (sidewalk radio), minor media, personal media, traditional (folk) media, community media, grass-root media, independent media etc. Moreover, in this research, alternative media is used to refer to all the concepts connoted by the involvement of such different names.

[I]t is necessary to recognize that the form of media itself affects the nature of communication and the response. This is particularly significant for political processes where the use of different forms of media can create different kinds of relation between sender and receiver, leader and followers (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1997; 232).

Furthermore, Spitulnik (2002:179) explains vividly that alternative media are a “... crucial part of civil society and the public sphere, understood most broadly, as the arena where citizens and citizen-based associations discuss state authority, political accountability, and representation.” Likewise, Hyden and Leslie (2002) confirm that, studying political communication in Africa based on the formal (mainstream) media loses its luster unless it includes a look at the alternative media component. Ethiopia, as an African country, is not an exception in this regard.

One of the leading Ethiopian folklorists, Fekade Azeze (2006), also indicates in one of his articles that informal media forms are the major alternative sphere for Ethiopians political, economic and social expressions. He states that these media serve as quicker and easier methods of message exchange among the public than the mainstream media. He also notes that these media amplify various voices of the community and dialogue of the citizens. Based on his long experience in the area, Fekade stresses that the real feeling and voice of most Ethiopians can be better heard in these traditional ways of expression. The cultural and historical backgrounds of the society create such inclinations since these factors can have significant influence on the tradition.

Plausibly, most of the scholars (Fekade, 2006, Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi, 1997, Spitulnik, 2002, Hyden and Leslie, 2002, MacNair, 2003, Graber, 2000) agree on the alternative media’s considerable potential to mediate between the state and society in contemporary Africa, and that researchers should give attention to this issue. However as Spitulink (2002) describes, this mediation is not in direct dialogue with the state; rather it is in

defused dialogues. The transmitted messages in such ways into more public political arenas may have the eventual effect either of increased democratization or conflict (Spitulnik, 2002:179). Therefore, alternative small media political communication space is an area that should be researched for better utilization. In line with this Graber (2004:56) says, “If the political climates were known, one could forecast political developments in the nation.”

Despite all these facts, research has underrepresented alternative small media in the political communication process all over the world. In Ethiopia, more seriously, the topic has remained almost untouched.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Wilbur Schramm (in Hyden and Leslie, 2002:5) makes us understand that communication has great potential to make a difference in the development arena in general, and in the political sphere in particular. However, Hyden and Leslie (2000) argue that, the potential of communication and media in the political sphere have not got enough attention in Africa. Even the limited literature which deals with political communication has had a focus only on the formal (mainstream) media which are not capable of depicting the Africa situation fully. Therefore the existing gap in the area of alternative media and communication studies must be addressed by further research. In line with this, this study intends to investigate the messages of the alternative media to contribute little in order to reduce the gap.

To make use of the communication potential in political development, it is important to study it properly in its context (Hyden and Leslie, 2002, Graber, 2000). Therefore, research that considers the communication culture of Africans in general and that of Ethiopians in particular is essential. Accordingly, scholars recommend consideration of the alternative forms of communication for better understanding the citizens’ political understanding and how they are communicated. The Ethiopian tradition of secrecy (Fekade,

2006), especially on political issues, usually leads them to communicate politics informally. Political discussion in Ethiopia has not taken place in an open public arena for several reasons throughout history. This previous history still has an influence on the political discussion sphere even in the improved situation of the 1990s and afterwards. Therefore, by considering this communication culture of Ethiopians, this research gives attention to the alternative forms for a better understanding of the different dimensions of the political communication process in the country.

Apart from that, in Ethiopia, the utilization of alternative media to shape the political system is not a recent phenomenon, and many leaders have benefited from it. Fekade (2006:149) proves this to us in his explanation of the past, traditional experiences:

In the olden days, emperors, kings, governors, and local officials reportedly used to ask ‘irräñña mīn alä?’ (meaning, “what do shepherds say?”). If there are things that have gone wrong in the community, if there are prophecies of what is to come, critical and prophetic views are said to be expressed in the songs of young shepherds. Oral tradition has it that Menelik benefited a lot from the views, criticisms and warnings of these shepherds. Thus, it could be said that there was a tradition of governance in Ethiopia which always gave room and paid attention to these voices.

Contrarily, the modern political systems in Ethiopia do not seem to give adequate room for alternative communication media, though it no doubt contributes a lot to the political development of the country. Thus studying these media in a systematic way may make a contribution to such utilization, as well.

In addition, the formal communication media are not strong enough to mediate between the state and the public. According to the report of the ‘Press Reference’ (Aadland and Fackler, 2009), within the Ethiopian political context, the role of media is not comprehensive. So, the report elaborates, “*Ethiopians*

have developed a sophisticated ability to interpret anything that emerges from the government quarters. Their basic assumption is that what they hear is not true.” The implication is that there is some communication gap in the political communication arena. This is one of the reasons that motivate this study of alternative media: to contribute in narrowing the gap, and to point out the information break based on the contents of some of the political messages in these popular media.

Above all, as the experiences of many countries show, alternative media messages pose important political agendas in their spheres, which are usually oppositional (Spitulnik, 2002). These messages, with their unrestricted contents, circulate among the public freely. However, some of their contents might be defective and could cause crises. Therefore it is good to study them systematically in order to have an understanding of the most important issues to the public and the exact intent of the stories. Having this can help the ruling powers, policy makers, and communication and media researchers to have inspiration about the secret oppositional voices.

Generally, alternative media political messages and their communication have a contextual relationship with Ethiopians' political communication culture, history and the media situation in general. Therefore, a study of this kind may add something to the understanding the political communication atmosphere of the country and to predictions about the future.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to explore the contents of alternative media's purely political messages that have been communicated in Addis Ababa since 2005 to 2010.

Based on this major objective, the following are specific objectives of the study:

- to identify and categorize the messages transmitted via the alternative media based on their major themes;
- to analyze the nature and tones of these messages;
- to examine the sources of the messages;
- to explore the channels and networks utilized in the communication media, and;
- to identify the forms of the messages.

1.4. Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the major themes of alternative media messages?
2. What types of message are communicated and what is the nature and tone of the messages?
3. Who are the major sources and participants of the political messages?
5. How do the communications take place, with what channels and networks?
6. What are the forms of the messages and how are they expressed?

1.5. Significance of the Study

Studying alternative media messages that have been communicated in Addis since 2005 can have the following benefits in political communication sphere of the country and in the field of study in the following ways:-

In the first place, communication has a central role in the political development process. Jandit (2004:7) for instance says that communication can only be understood by understanding the culture it supports. Thus, this study may contribute to understanding the culture of political communication in the country, which could be a basis for better and more effective political development. The assumption is that they impart development messages using

the peoples' medium and therefore it is important to know what these different forms already contain and how they can be shaped. This may, as well, grant possible utilization of these media for political communication development.

Secondly, since it explores and analyzes messages of the alternative media, it can help to understand what is communicated by the public under 'free' media situations. This in turn assists evaluation of the political atmosphere, peoples' understanding of the state in power, and of other political actors and their activities.

Thirdly, how people produce and transmit messages in such media is explored in this study. So grasping a clear idea about this can facilitate the development of strategies that can operate in the culture of the communication.

Fourth, different organizations concerned with politics can be aware of the potential and shortcomings of alternative media based on the messages analyzed in this study. Consequently, they may be able to plan its utilization.

The fifth will be that, as various researchers agree, most western communication theories and models have failed in Africa. The failure of the theories and models emanates from the fact that they were products of foreign social, economic and cultural environments. Therefore, this study will look at the 'free', participatory communication sphere which is peculiar to Africa in general and to Ethiopia in particular, to contribute to a better participatory communication model and theory development.

Finally, it can contribute to fill the research gap in the field of alternative media as political communication spaces in Ethiopia and in Africa in general. It also can be a spring board for further research and theorizing alternative small media as political communication spheres.

1.6. Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study aims at exploring the political messages transmitted through the alternative media and analyzes them qualitatively. In addition, it will explain how the messages are communicated in the sphere together with their nature. Identifying the network, channel and forms utilized in the communication sphere is also a center of attention.

The scope is limited to analyzing local and purely political messages in the arena. Though both national and international political issues are discussed in the alternative media, non-local political issues discussed in the alternative media are outside of the scope of this research.

In addition, because of budget and time constraints, the study is limited to analyzing jokes, folk music and poems. Messages exchanged after 2005 are the focus of the study. Though the study was intended at the beginning to study the messages circulated since 1991, during data collection it became almost impossible to find informants who memorize enough messages communicated in all these years. In addition it was also hard to get records and other secondary sources that documented the messages. Since most of the alternative media messages in focus have been transmitted orally, they are gone from the minds of the communicators. So the research is forced to limit itself to the time that is fresh in people's memories: 2005 to present.

1.7. Definitions of Key Terms

Alternative media- in this research refers to small communication media which appears in the form of traditional and modern communication modes. It includes jokes, folk music, poems, underground cassettes, web pages, mobile phones and other verbal genres of critique and commentary. These communications also identified by the names: informal media, small media, radio trottoir (sidewalk radio), minor media, personal media, popular media, community media, folk media, traditional media and so on in different literature.

Political communication- refers to any conversation about political issues

Political messages- refer messages that are about politics.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Review of Related Literature: Analytical and Theoretical Frameworks

As the study aims at investigating political messages of alternative media, reviewing literatures that have relevance to the topics is imperative to have an analytical and theoretical framework. So, in this chapter, literature written on political communication and alternative media are assessed in addition to the discussion of theoretical frameworks. The topics of the review are: what political communication and alternative media are: their properties, elements and their nature in political communication.

2.1. Concepts of Political Communication

Political communication is an interdisciplinary field of study that draws its concepts from communication, political science, journalism, sociology, psychology, history, rhetoric and other fields (Kaid, 2004). This diverse derivation generates difficulty to find one universally accepted definition that can cover all aspects of the field. In addition, defining the terms "communication" and "politics" even independently is awkward and it is needless to say, it gets more fluid to describe them together. However, it will be useful to mention some popular definitions of political communication to bring some common understanding.

The Political Science Dictionary (1973:69) defines political communication as “the transmission of meaning having relevance for the functioning of political system . . . communication is a means that the political system receives and acts upon input and develop outputs.” Based on this definition, communication is a key in the political process in which actors of the political process exchange information for effective functioning.

Chaffee (1975: in Kaid, 2004), focusing on the function of communication in the political practice, defines it simply as: “role of communication in the political process.”

Denton and Woodward (1990, in McNair, 2003:3) more elaborately define it thus: “Political communication is pure discussion about the allocation of public resources (revenues), official authority (who is given the power to make legal, legislative and executive decisions) and official sanctions (what the state rewards or punishes).”

Correspondingly, McNair (2003:4) following the Denton and Woodward definition, incorporates the following into his definition of political communication, while taking any purposeful communication about politics as political communication. His conviction is that political communication incorporates:

1. All forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives.
2. Communication addresses to these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspaper columnists.
3. Communication about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics.

It can be implied from all the definitions that political communication deals with the production, dissemination, processing and effects of information, either through media or interpersonally, within a political context. This includes the study of the media, the analysis of speeches by politicians and those that are trying to influence the political process, and formal and informal conversations among members of the public. According to McNair’s (2003) explanation, interpersonal political communications in public bars, at dinner parties, behind closed doors, information gleaned by journalists from face-to-face meetings, etc are also included, and they are among the most highly significant discussions in the political process.

2.2. Elements of Political Communication

The process of political communication mainly focuses on the relationship between three elements, namely: *political organizations, media and citizens* (McNair, 2003). Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) also state elements with their specific aspects as: *the political institution in their communication aspects, media institutions in their political aspects and audience orientations to political communication*. In addition to these interconnected components of the system, they integrate *communication-relevant aspects of political culture* as another essential constituent.

2.2.1. Political Organizations

In the process of political communication, political organizations can be political actors, either individuals or organized bodies. As one stakeholder of the process, they work to influence the decision-making process in different ways (McNair, 2003, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995).

In this category, governments, political parties, public organizations, pressure groups, terrorist groups and the like are included. These organizations are among the influential actors in the political system and in communications as well.

2.2.2. Citizens (Audiences)

The main purpose of political communication is to influence audiences since without them no political message can be relevant. Therefore, the citizens are the other fundamental actors in the political communication operation. Citizens are not only receptors of political messages; they are also producers and above all the main 'users' of all political activities.

Depending on the specific political messages, the audience for a political communication can be as broad as all voters of the nation or as narrow as one party member. Whatever the size or the nature of the audience is, the main

objective of the communication is to affect the political behavior of the audience. What should be kept in mind is that the issue of media effects is the most complex and an unending matter of controversy.

2.2.3. The Media

The media are the key and central player of the political communication process. McNair (2003:12) explains the role of media as follows: “In democratic political systems the media function both as transmitters of political messages which originates outside the media organization itself, and as senders of political messages constructed by journalists.”

As it is clearly stated in McNair’s explanation, such kinds of media roles can be granted only in democratic political system. In such environments, political actors use the media to communicate their political programs, policy statements, electoral appeals, pressure group campaigns, etc. to the audience they need to persuade. Citizens also as actors of the communication system can express their idea, opinions, critiques, or opposition in the media. The media is naturally expected to mediate between the state and the public (Kaid, 1991, in McNair, 2003).

2.3. Mainstream Media and Political Communication

Media as it is a major element in the political communication process has key functions. To work with these key functions the media send messages that can facilitate achieving the intended functions. McNair (2003:21) lists five major functions the communication media can provide in ideal democratic societies’. These functions are: *informing about* what is going on around, *educating* about some objective facts about the political process, *providing a platform* for public political discussion and other political actors, *publicizing* political and governmental institutions (this is also called the watchdog role of the media) and *advocating* different political viewpoints.

Furthermore McNair (2003) suggests, for effective utilization of the media for such functions and to make them a truly public sphere, they should be comprehensible to the audience and truthful in reflecting the idea of the political parties or others stakeholders in the political process.

Otherwise, as Sreberny-Mohammodi and Mohammadi (1997:220) illustrate, the media might play a destructive role rather than being helpful in the political communication development arena. They describe different faces of the media and the functions they can serve as follows: *“In the contemporary world, media are part of political problems and parts of solutions, essential elements of repressive political structures as well as vehicles for their overthrow.”*

2.3.1. In Africa

In Africa, according to Hyden and Leslie (2002), the role of communication in the process of any development sphere got attention just after the development of modernization theory in 1950's and 60's. With the development of modernization theory, mass media in general became an important mediator in linking modernization with the masses. However, even in that period it did not really do much to expand political communication spaces. Their employment was limited to socio-economic developments rather than political developments.

Throughout history, with slight differences from country to country, in all African countries there is a resemblance in the propagandist style of reporting and content of the mainstream media. As Hyden and Leslie (2002: 7) articulated: lack of informational quality of the media is the reflection of government ownership and control. Yet the problems were not only with quality, but also with quantity. According to a UNESCO report, in the 1980's Africa was observed as the poorest continent in the world in terms of newspaper availability.

These days, there are democratic reforms in several African states. However as Spitulnick (2002: 184) describes by referring to Joseph (1997) “*despite the constitutional declarations of democracy, there exists a continued restriction placed on the expression and discussion of oppositional viewpoints.*” On the other hand, apart from government interferences, the existing independent media, which were expected to be a public sphere for political communication, have themselves lacked ethical and professional quality.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude from the above discussion, that mainstream media are not an effective means of political communication in Africa.

2.3.2. In Ethiopia

The mainstream media of Ethiopia as mediators of political discussion is not an exception in any way from the media of most African countries. Much research has evidenced that, throughout history, they have not been free and fair public arena specifically when it comes to political matters because of the domination of the governmental administration (Aadland and Fackler, 2009).

Since the establishment of the mainstream media in the 19th century, throughout its history, there have been problems of independence. The first newspaper, ‘*Aemero*’, which was published in 1898, was run under the mercy of the Emperor. Similarly the late coming media, radio and television stations that emerged in the country in 1935 and in 1964 respectively, also served as the mouthpieces of different rulers in Ethiopia.

Until the downfall of the military regime in 1991, all the press and the electronic media served the government in power. Though there are some improvements since this period regarding freedom of expression, the media have not accomplished the status of being a ‘fourth state’ and free public arena for political communication yet. Aadland and Fackler (2009), in line with this, said the following about the situation in the media:

It is fair to say that while the makeup of Ethiopia's government has frequently changed during the twentieth century, the printing press's function, as well as that of radio, television, and news agencies, has remained the same: to serve the government in power. Media have consistently and primarily promoted government policy and activities. Consequently, Ethiopia has little or no indigenous tradition of thinking about the press as a free commercial enterprise, or as a watchdog or critic of the government.

The inefficiency of the media has been observed not only in the government owned but also with the so called 'independent' media. Since the state owned media are mouthpieces of the governors, the privates' failed to serve the people because of internal (i.e. being sensational, partisan, 'polarized' and so on) (Shimelis, 2006) and external factors (i.e. systematic government repression, censorships) (Aadland and Fackler, 2009 and Yetenayet, 2008).

2.4. Concepts of Alternative Media

The conventional definition of mass media is somehow the opposite of the interpersonal media. These two differ in terms of the scale and scope of production, distribution and consumption or reception. One of the researchers in alternative informal media studies, Spitulnick (2002: 200) explains that, communication media such as these which include the use of political graffiti, leaflets, cartoons, underground cassettes, web pages, jokes and other verbal genres of critique and commentary and are out of the range of both traditional mass or interpersonally mediated communications. These discursive genres of communication are identified as alternative media also called by the names: informal media, radio trottoir (sidewalk radio), small media, minor media, personal media, popular media, community media, folk media, and traditional media and so on by different scholars. About this difference on naming Spitulnick (ibid: 200) says the following:

There is no particular disciplinary or theoretical consistency in the use of these various phrases. For example, the phrases 'minor media' and 'small media' are used interchangeably in the field of community

health education. In international studies, 'personal media' and 'small media' are used in synonymous fashions. The key difference, however, is that in the international communication literature, these media are distinguished for their crucial political and often oppositional functions.

As Spitulnick clearly explains, in whatever names it is identified, the most important feature of the alternative media is that it allows people to communicate on political issues. They are serving as an alternative to state-run media and reflect oppositional political views in many countries, especially in 'politically developing countries'. Despite the lack of formal alternative media in such nations, according to Sreberny-Mohammodi and Mohammadi (1997:220-221), they become popular modes for various kinds of mediated communications. These scholars also added,

[W]hat has been crucial is the notion of these media [alternative media] as participatory, public phenomena, controlled neither by big states nor big corporations. Thus the distinction between 'big' and 'small' cannot depend on particular kinds of technologies or even on their putative audiences, but rather on the manner of use of all technologies.

Based on this, Sreberny-Mohammodi and Mohammadi (1997) suggest these media as self managed dissonant media, which have a genuine face as an alternative means of communication, are very important in creating a democratic environment in political communication.

In the case of developed countries (i.e. the West), the alternative media are locally based and organized, nonprofit, participatory forms, so they focus on popular involvement rather than professional production, horizontal communication rather than vertical, and active participation in meaning making rather than passive absorbers of mass mediated culture and values. In those nations, these media are means of direct participation and the voice of the voiceless who cannot be heard by other means that is why they called a 'public communication'.

Though the form of alternative media may be different in different places, based on Sreberny-Mohammodi and Mohammadi (1997:221), the basic idea in alternative media is that they are independent of the state so the public can express its voice, its opposition to the state, or produce its own messages by using the existing channels and technologies that are available and accessible. These media are not only independent from the government but also from profit making corporations, so they serve the people and are called ‘the people’s voice’.

2.5. Properties of Alternative Media

Alternative media have a hybrid feature of mass and interpersonal media. As scholars of the field explain, the division of media as mass and interpersonal shows a problem in regards to these alternative media. These alternative means of communication take the intermediary position between the ‘new’ (mass) and ‘old’ (interpersonal). As Spitulnick (2002: 181) explained by referring to Fischer and Abedi (1991) “small media are reminders of the postmodern condition.” He added “they blend texts and graphics that derive from both local and transitional sources: and they engage the themes of tradition, modernity and identity.”

According to Spitulnick (2002) unlike the mass media these alternative media transmission model is not one-to-many. The producers of messages are also consumers. Receivers may act as distributors. It is common to get multiple sites of production and reproduction, also distribution and redistribution.

With regard to the communication technologies, Spitulnick (2002) said, they do not use technologies like satellites, photo offset printing, broadcasting and so on like the mainstream media. But this does not mean they do not employ new electronic technologies. Many new technologies like audio and video cassettes, personal computers, telephone and facsimile can be used in these alternative media. As it was seen in the 1970’s Iranian revolution cassettes and leaflets

were utilized to communicate political messages (Sreberny-Mohammodi and Mohammadi, 1997).

Alternative media communications usually utilized established networks like neighborhoods, friendships, workplace relationships, religious spheres, etc. These were employed as a communication network within the sphere.

In addition, research (Sreberny-Mohammodi and Mohammadi, 1997 and Spitulnick, 2002) has shown that already established genres like songs, narrations, jokes, folktales and so on are forms of small media communication.

These communications are not always stable in a specific area; sometimes they extended throughout the country and also outside the nation. The same is true for the sources, they can be either local or out of the nation. Therefore the range of the communication space ranges from cities to across nations and continents, unlike the notion of a civil society which always occurs within the physical boundaries of a nation state (Spitulnick, 2002).

As Hyden and Leslie (2002) describe, participants in the alternative media are diverse and any one is free to contribute. From these, there are people who have privileged access to confidential information like officials' drivers, servants, market sellers, etc. These people specifically serve by providing important information. However, everybody have the potential to be a producer or receiver of these media messages.

In addition, Spitulnick (2002: 184) describes, in Africa men are more literate than women. These might made gender difference in the use of print media. However in small media these gender dichotomies might be misleading because there are many forms of alternative media which didn't require literacy, like folklore. He also substantiates his idea by explain the domination on the formal media by literate, the urban, the elite, male and Eurocentric models. Even

independent press, community radio and the live alternative media cannot fully capture the political situation in Africa since they marginalize many.

The alternative media can serve to suggest a portrait of the poor and illiterate segments of the population in Africa to engage in the political communication as their own way of resisting oppressive discourse from the top. However this does not mean that the literate and the rich do not use these media.

Above all these, as Lent (1987: 146) describes, alternative media (he calls it folk media) are intimate with the masses, available at low cost, and relished by different age groups and both sexes. They have great acceptance by the people and can carry both traditional and modern messages.

Based on Spitulnick's (2002) explanation, the scale of alternative media is relatively small in terms of production, distribution and consumption. However this does not mean that their impact is small or insignificant. Sometimes they even may have vast coverage that can be compared with the mass media. With its less established but innovative and sometimes transitory mode the information flow is multi-directional. The information can flow horizontally and vertically so that structure is often participatory with multiple sites of production and distribution. Both face-to-face and non face-to-face communication is employed in these communication media.

What makes these communications different from others is that they have less direct dialogue with agents of the state and they are less visible.

2.6. Alternative Media and New Technologies

As Sreberny-Mohammedi and Mohammadi (1997:226) explained, new technologies of communication are helping to open up a potential public sphere as in the example of Iran's audiotapes, photocopied leaflets, etc. The internet, mobile phone technologies and the like are advancing the use of alternative media.

The nature of new technologies and the development of the international system facilitate the quick production and distribution of messages. Because of such technological opportunities and peoples' attachments to such media, it is difficult to control such messages even for the most repressive and security oriented states (Spitulnick, 2002).

For example in Poland, the committee for workers' self-defense created an underground network. They used an underground bulletin to disseminate different messages. In addition, they wrote on it the following message: "by disseminating this bulletin you are acting within your rights and playing a part in their defense. Read it, copy it, and pass it on" (Sreberny-Mohammodi and Mohammadi, 1997: 225 quoting Downing, 1984: 326).

Similarly in Iran, many government-controlled technologies are used by the political movement secretly. The photocopy machines, which are heavily controlled, are manipulated for very strongly prohibited political participation by some political actors, without the knowledge of the repressive state.

It is also possible to look at the cases in Kenya, Somalia, South Africa, Nigeria and so on as examples, to be evidence for new technology utilization like, audio cassettes, internet, and the like for political expression and opposition (Spitulnick, 2002).

2.7. Significance of Alternative media in political communication

As modern development philosophies put people at the center of development, involving the masses is a choice without a decision. In these new approaches to development, communication also gains a more central and important function.

After the 1990's, as Hyden and Leslie (2002) explain, development communications started to take on new forms. Rather than conveying the messages only downwards, vertical and horizontal communication started to be

implemented. Consequently, oral traditions such as songs, theaters, music and the like are used in the newly reordered communication scene. Accepting the potential that culture has for empowering effects, these alternative informal media are used in politics in addition to the socio-economic issues. For example, in some African and Asian countries civic educations have been conducted using theater to address the masses, using the potential of traditional culture.

Even beyond that, Hyden and Leslie (2002: 7) argue for the informal media's potential in its own right in political communication development, besides incorporating them in the conventional media. Therefore they suggest giving additional attention to the alternative media.

In a similar manner, Spitulnick (2002) illuminates the utility alternative media has in the political sphere. He says that like other types of alternative media (i.e. independent newspapers, private radio, etc), such alternative media have political content and a potential emancipatory function.

Sreberny-Mohammodi and Mohammadi (1997) also put forward, based on the lessons of the Iranian revolution and some other countries, the need for a new model to be developed to explain the political situations of some nations. The new model is the model of alternative small media. Unlike the previous models, mediated culture has become part of the causal sequences of revolutionary crises, as well as central to the revolutionary process. As they suggest, all revolutionary processes are political processes, thus communication processes as well. As a communication process these alternative small media include: articulation of competing ideologies and demands, the development of leaders and followers, the circulation of information, the exhortations to participation and mobilization.

Lent (1987) also explains that the alternative media are capable of making development communication available in the public arena. In comparison with

the mainstream media, he says, the mainstream media cannot adequately perform the development roles expected of them, mainly because they don't reach enough of the developing world's population with credible and relevant information.

Therefore it is possible to conclude that alternative media have great importance in political communication mediation. So, it is important to dig out what is going on in such communication spheres to understand the real political situation for further utilization.

In line with this, the well-known political communication scholar McNair (2003) also writes that political communication in the interpersonal network - in public bars, dinner parties, behind closed-doors and the like - could be taken among the highly significant function these media have in the political process. He also acknowledged the potential they have to find possible gaps between the public and the other political actors' rhetoric.

2.7.1. In Africa

Culturally, African societies have high utilization of alternative small media, especially for political communication. As scholars like Hyden and Leslie (2002) explain, the dominance of oral tradition and the relative weaknesses of formal institutions direct to these media consumption.

The well known African folklorist Ruth Finnegan (1970: 272) also argues that folklore (as one form of alternative media) can take the place of the press in a non-literate society. In line with this, Sreberny-Mohammedi & Mohammadi (1997) state, for societies with a literate tradition of communication are different from an oral tradition and the 'illiterates' have more inclination to use alternative and informal ways of communication. The scholars also add that the shortcomings of the formal media, which are controlled by the government leads to grow the usage of the media, to establish free communicative space.

The folk media and its utilization in the political process are not recent phenomena in Africa, though the form and the content differ from time to time and from one political system to another. To show the significance these alternative media have in history, Finnegan (1970: 273) states the following:

Panegyric is an obvious example, involving propaganda and support for the authorities, taking its extreme form in the mouth of the official court poet responsible for propagating the versions of historical events authorized by the rulers. Poetry [folk media] can also be used to pressurize those in authority or to comment on local politics. Songs of insult, challenge, or satirical comment also have a long history, and can function not only on a personal level but also as politically effective weapons.

She adds that the ongoing relation between traditional political communication and the modern culture in Africa is being adapted to particular political circumstances.

As Ruth Finnegan (1970) states in her book 'Oral Literature in Africa,' for example, in South Africa, several political protests were expressed through cultural songs and that might be the reason for their wide circulation. Some religious verses even express political aspirations and ideals that are not easily communicated through other methods or media.

The wider usage of political songs in Africa was gaining acceptance from African political parties in the 1970's; thus, based on Finnegan's (1970) observations, they were using the songs for political communication, propaganda, political pressure and education purposes. She adds that these oral forms also appear in print and written forms. In view of that, they can serve as powerful and flexible weapons in many political communication activities.

The innocuous nature of folklore or alternative media, as Finnegan (1970) argues, gives them an advantage over other formal political communication

media. Based on her description, this was particularly true in Africa during the early nationalist movements.

In colonial situations, where authorities mostly could not speak local languages, these alternative media were utilized with great advantage. For example, in Somalia love songs have been used for political message transmission. Using the language hurdle, the people even were able to perform these opposition songs publicly and on colonizer's controlled radio stations.

Similar things happen in East Africa during the independence struggle. The Kenyan Mau Mau movement songs of the 1950's are also among these effective political communications. The Mau Mau movement was partly political and partly religious, so it was banned by the government. However, using the songs of the people, leaders of the movement were able to carry out active and widespread propaganda among the Kenyan masses.

Such instances observed in contemporary Africa as well. For example, Nigerians' experience of using web sites (Ogoni web page) show how political issues raised by the alternative media sphere have a multi sided circulation across different media technologies and communicative spaces. It also shows the important role different audiences can make alternative media communication more visible and effective (Spitulnick, 2002: 190). On the other hand, in Nigeria the use of recording technologies for popular representations were done mainly in religious-political sphere.

In Kenya also, audio cassettes of political opposition and former political leaders' speeches, songs, and so on have been used since the 1990's to create political communication spheres. The audio cassettes in Kenya were reproduced and distributed in several sites. Street vendors and music stores were the main reproducers and distributors. Matatus (private min-bus which are primary mode of public transportation in urban Kenya) played these cassettes and found captive audiences for their messages.

The messages of the cassettes (the songs) brought out themes that were debated throughout Kenya. These included various injustices, people's rights to representation, and the government's failure to address urban poverty, censorship, corruption and violence.

As Spitulnick (2002, 193) notes, citing Haugerud, the songs were "crucial symbolic weapons in active struggles for political transformation."

The experience of Kenya also shows that alternative media transmissions are very difficult to control. For example, President Moi banned street vendors and the playing of any such type of music in Matatu vans. However Matatu drivers silenced the tape while passengers were getting in, but played it at very high volume once on the road. The cassettes also continued to be played and reproduced in bars, shops and individuals homes.

The popularity of these cassettes emanates from its relative cheapness and the orality of the medium to address both the literate and non literate users.

The other important issue in these cassettes is the combination of the relatively new technology of the audio cassette, with the content and style of African cultures using songs, praise poems, and the like. The styles date back to colonial and pre-colonial times. This is the cultural and linguistic feature of such oral traditions.

Thus, Spitulnick (2002) concludes that political communication studies in Africa are incomplete if they didn't include the alternative media, which are the main means of information exchange in the continent outside of the formal media. The alternative media help Africans to create their own meaningful communication spaces. He argues that the formal media in Africa is not fully free, though there have been some improvements through time.

2.7.2. In Ethiopia

According to the well known Ethiopian folklorist Fekade Azeze (2006: 149), the alternative media are the communication spheres most Ethiopians use to express their view on any matter. Except for a few educated members of the community, the masses, either in urban or rural settings, usually express themselves in different forms of alternative media. The folk forms are one of the most popular alternative ways of expression.

The mode of communication in the alternative media, which favors interpersonal, group and cultural ways of communications, is among the highly valued and accepted method of communication in Ethiopia for any issue (Teshager, 2006, Gulilat, 2006, Getachew, 2006).

Utilization of the folk and other traditional ways as alternative media of political communication has a very long history in Ethiopia. The oral poetries, jokes, idiomatic expressions, anecdotes, nick names and so on is often used by the masses rather than the mainstream media for political expression. They have been taken as more reliable sources of information than the conventional media. The transmission in these channels is quite faster and easier than the products of the press, sometimes. These days, the communication of alternative media messages is improving because of infrastructural improvements and technological advancements in the nation (Fekade, 2006).

In Ethiopia, alternative media communication spaces serve to express what cannot be said directly about the political system. Thus it is possible to say they are real public arena that the citizens use to exchange information, to comment, to criticize, to warn the state in power and sometimes to mobilize the mass.

Many former emperors recognized the potential of these spheres to find out the real feelings of the mass, so, as Fekade (2006) describes, they used to ask what

the shepherds were saying (“eragna men ala?”). It was also well-known that the shepherds' songs were an accurate expression of their communities' views. Menelik was one of the emperors who took advantage of such media messages.

Generally, as Fekade clarifies, there were traditions of governance which considered the alternative media as important way of expression. Ethiopians also used to express their support, appreciation, disagreements, dissatisfactions, frustrations, and so on via these media all the time.

2.8. Theoretical Frameworks

Democratic-participant and agenda setting media theories are the hypothetical underpinning that the study gets informed.

2.8.1. Democratic-Participant Media Theory (Democratization)

Scholars have been introducing various assumptions on media from time to time and as some among the theorizations are indispensable to this study the influential ones are discussed here. One of the proponents of democratic-participant media theory, as Vatikiotis (2005), claims that media have to be participatory since they necessarily involve the mass that stand as the source and provider. This normative media theory, opposes the dominance and monopolization of the main mass media by the private sectors and other organizations and their top-down non-participant character.

The democratic-participant paradigm emerged as a result of the limitation of the mass media to meet the needs that arise from the daily experience of citizens and lack of advocacy to the minority and individual expressions (Oludayo, 2009). The theory rejects both the centralization and bureaucratization of public media and the commercialization and monopolization of privately owned media. According to Vatikiotis (2005), the theory views the ownership of the media by organizations as a mechanism of prevention of the media services from assisting social and political

developments. Accordingly, the media are expected to be constituted in small-scale terms, favoring horizontal model of interaction, and facilitating the expression of citizens' needs.

The pragmatic manifestations of such a model are many and varied, including the underground or alternative press, micro-media in rural settings, neighborhood media, wall posters, pirate radio, community cable television, samizdat publication, and media for women and ethnic minorities based on McQuail (1994) (cited in Vatikiotis, 2005).

Another scholar Jan Servaes (1999) expresses democratization in terms of participatory communication model. The model in participatory approach stresses the importance of the cultural identity of local communities and participation at all levels. It points to a strategy that is not merely inclusive of but largely emanates from the traditional receivers (Servaes, 1999). Such a participatory model grounds developmental process at a local/community level through the active participation of 'ordinary' people, involving the strengthening of democratic processes. Moreover, this perspective questions the conceptualization of a universal model of development. What is favored is, rather, multiplicity of approaches based on the context.

Moreover, the new communications technology has fostered new spaces for access and participation. Such practices as one platform for different types of communication through the digitalization of data; time-space compression; two-way, interactive communication had their own impacts. The implications such technological developments have provided the infrastructure for the support and encouragement of political action. Computer-mediated communications are being used by a wide range of political parties and ideological hues, voluntary organizations, pressure groups and other organizations in civil society as a means not only to reach potential supporters

and excel the traditional media filters, but to make network with one another, for the purpose of sharing information and resources.

2.8.2. Agenda Setting Theory

The theory of agenda-setting is all about the formation of public awareness and concern of most important issues by the news media (Rogers, 2004:10). Based on Roger's explanation (quoting Bernard Cohen, 1963) it is stated that "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people how to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its reader what to think about." In its communication process, it has media agenda, public agenda and policy agenda in consecutive temporal. The usual concern of communication researches in such a process are the media and the public agenda and their relationship.

Likewise McCombs and Shaw (cited in Rogers, 2004) also claim that that the agenda-setting function of the media causes the correlation between the media and public ordering of priorities. The media agenda has an enormous effect to a greater extent on those people who have a high need for orientation.

There are two basic assumptions in most agenda-setting researches. The first assumption is that the media do not reflect reality because they usually filter and shape it. The second one assumes media concentration on a few issues and subjects which leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. On the other hand, stimulating interpersonal communication is reported as one of the ways of media influences on agenda-setting which in turn usually prompt change in behavior according to Rogers (2004) who quotes Dearing and Rogers (1996).

It should be clear that different media have different agenda-setting potential. Agenda-setting theory seems quite appropriate to help us understand the pervasive role of the media like on political communication systems. In light with this the agenda setting role and potential of the alternative media in Addis

examined. In that, the agendas set as important by these media discussed in detail.

Conclusion

In this chapter analytical and theoretical frameworks which enable to examine alternative media political messages presented. In the discussion it is stated the mainstream media are not an effective means of political communication in Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular. Based on this and other historical and cultural factors people tend to communicate politics in alternative ways. Therefore looking at the alternative media is crucial to make the political communication studies complete.

Alternative media as media which is independent of the state and profit making organizations utilized the public to express its voice, its opposition to the state, or produce its own messages by using the existing channels and technologies that are available and accessible. They serve the people and are usually called 'the people's voice'. In addition they are intimate with the masses, available at low cost, and relished by different age groups and both sexes. They have great acceptance by the people and can carry both traditional and modern messages. The nature of new technologies also facilitated the quick production and distribution of political messages in the alternative media and made difficult to control the messages even for the most repressive and security oriented states.

As it is experienced in many African countries and Ethiopia, alternative media has been used for certain political purposes. This participatory media has its own agenda set by the participants in all the times. Thus the agendas and the way they are communicated discussed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Research Methodology

This chapter deals with the methodological issues of the study. Thus, issues related to the research design and their procedures are discussed in detail.

3.1. Research Design and Methods

Since the aim of this study is to analyze political messages that are communicated via the alternative media, a qualitative research design is employed to achieve the goal. Creswell (2007: 51) explains the significance of qualitative approach:

A qualitative approach is an appropriate to use to study a research problem when the problem needs to be explored: when a complex, detailed understanding is needed; when the researcher wants to write in a literary, flexible style; and when the researcher seeks to understand the context or setting of participants.

Therefore, to explore what the alternative media messages are, their nature, and participants together with the channels and networks employed within the cultural context in detail, the study makes use of qualitative design. Graber (2004) in support of this says that the qualitative method can help to interpret political messages, and if it is done systematically it may be useful and accurate.

Among the various qualitative research designs, content analysis is selected and utilized for this study. Content analysis in general (either qualitative or quantitative) is the most hallowed and widely used method in political communication research to analyze media messages. Specifically, the qualitative content analysis is often used whenever there is a need for detailed understanding of media messages and the way they are communicated in a specific context (Graber, 2004:46). Graber has the following to say in line with this:

When research focuses on political messages, some form of content analysis is in order. It can be applied to all types of message content, including [but not limited to] writing or printed documents, recorded messages, films and audio tapes. Messages may even be analyzed instantaneously if observers are present when they are uttered initially.

A qualitative content analysis beyond simple counting of words for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text provides knowledge help in understanding of how the phenomenon under study takes place (Griffin, 2006). Thus, in this study, qualitative content analysis as a research design is used for interpretation of the content of the messages through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes and other patterns.

3.2. Research Procedures

Any content analysis starts by selecting a body of data (Graber, 2004:54). Furthermore, the data selection process needs prerequisites in the identification of data sources and data collection steps.

3.2.1. Sources and Their Selection

The data for this study were collected from different individuals who are living in Addis Ababa, and who have been using alternative media for political communication. Since it is unthinkable to collect data from each and every resident of the municipality, 21 key informants were selected and involved following certain procedures. The number is limited to 21 for two main reasons. The first and the primary reason is that it is fair enough to have a representative sample for this type of communication research. The second reason is that it is difficult to get many people who volunteer to impart political messages they know, mainly for security reasons. So as to locate the key sources, availability and snowball sampling were utilized.

The sampling methods were chosen because alternative media communications are not open to anyone. By their nature these forms of political communications are secret, and users are cautious about being officially

disclosed to anyone who is suspected as an outsider (Fekade, 2006, McNair, 2003, Spitulnick, 2002, Sreberny-Mohammodi and Mohammadi, 1997). That is the reason why much of the literature explains the fact that it is difficult to access the information from any person or group, anytime. Therefore, to unveil what has been going on, using personal networks and key persons who are perceived as 'insider' to be linked with other participants of the communication, availability and snowball sampling become of paramount importance.

It was important to incorporate various voices in this study. To this effect, the selection of respondents of diversified age group, sex and educational background was necessitated. Accordingly, among the 21 key informants, there are 12 men and 9 women, of whom 4 are high school graduates (grade 12), 3 are collage students, 8 are diploma or bachelor degree holders and the rest are post graduates. With regard to their age groups, there are 2 teenagers under 18, 14 youths between 18-35 and 5 adults above 35.

3.2.2. Data collection methods

Because of the constraints of resources and difficulty of accessing handy data, this research has not attempted the gathering of all alternative media messages that have political contents. Rather, the study is limited to collecting messages in the forms of jokes, folk music, puns, and oral poems. Among these, messages in electronic form that have been exchanged by subscribers of mobile phones through their Bluetooth, infrared² and short text messages (SMS) were collected. In addition to these, there appeared to be messages in audio, messages communicated/ performed in oral and written forms in different

² Bluetooth and infrared are features enable to transfer data wirelessly from one phone to another in the 2.4 GHz unlicensed band, with a range of 10- 100 meters and by pointing infrared ports of the phones in straight line connectivity respectively

gatherings and public squares of Addis Ababa which are collected through participant observations and interviews.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is the main data collecting method in this study. To understand the messages within their own social and communicative contexts, direct observation of the communication and message transmission processes was made in many occasions of social gatherings where the data collection was possible. In this regard, the 2009 Ethiopian Great Run, football games fields in different villages, and leisure time friendly gatherings and entertainments in local refreshment centers such as cafes and tearooms were found to be convenient and safe settings for the data collection through participant observations.

Many jokes and folk poems are thus collected with participant observation. To this end, note taking was utilized since informants didn't allow recording of their voices for safety reasons. With the consent of informants, the data collected were presented anonymously.

Interview

To collect the political messages and have a clear understanding of how they are communicated, interviews were also employed in this study. The interviewing is used for collecting political messages as they naturally appeared in various contexts. The meaning of the messages (interpretations) and other information related to the process were also asked for and noted during the interview sessions, which hopefully helps to minimize over reading and subjectivity of the researcher's interpretation. To this end, informants, who were engaged in the friendly and relaxed interaction during the above mentioned occasions, were asked about the nature and contextual meanings of the political messages expressed in the jokes, songs and oral poetry

communicated therein. In addition, information about the sources of the messages, the channels and networks were collected using such interviews on different occasions.

3.2.3. Data analysis and presentation

The local political messages collected from the above sources using participant observations and interviews were analyzed and presented using the qualitative narrative method. In the last four decades, the use of narrative analysis as well suited entry into understanding of the multifaceted aspects of human life—social, cultural, political, psychological—has gained a wide currency in the interdisciplinary fields of the social and human sciences, including communication and media studies, political thought, journalism, literature, folklore, psychology, historiography, sociology, anthropology, medicine, sociolinguistics, and so on. The growing interest in narrative is based on the common recognition of narrative as the most important mode of knowledge and communication whereby human life, experiences, actions and thoughts are organized and reflected on (Hinchman and Hinchman 2001; Kreiswirth 1992).

Among more than 88 stories collected for this study, samples believed to be adequate enough to serve the purpose of the study were selected and interpreted, so as to maintain readability of the report. Representative stories were selected for each category according to their ratio and relevance to the issues raised.

The coding of the messages to create categories of analysis follows the common system used in content analysis studies. The coding considers the theme, sources, nature, channels and networks and forms of the messages. Under each category, the data gathered through participant observations and interviews were systematically presented and analyzed to yield justifiable generalization of the study.

Categories

Under the five key categories of analysis (theme, sources, nature, channels and networks and forms of the messages), there are also sub-categories developed on the basis of data collected. The key categories are:

Themes of the messages: the pivotal or core message of the story. The alternative media political messages contain such themes as governance, election, human rights, issues related to political parties and their leaders, and mainstream media.

Governance: concerns issues, actions and agents of government or administration. Therefore under this sub-section, matters concerning government, government officials, policies and their implementation are presented.

Election: issues related to the periodic election and its processes constitute the major concerns of messages in this category. Thus, narratives about the pre and post election processes are dealt with here.

Political parties: the analysis and interpretation of participation of political parties and multiparty systems are manifested in this category. Thus, issues related to the various parties and their leaders in the country are discussed under this category.

Human rights: the concern of this category would be messages regarding basic rights and freedoms that all humans should be endowed with. The core themes discussed hereunder are the right to life and work, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law.

The mainstream media: stories about political aspects of the mainstream media institutions are brought to awareness under this category.

Nature and tone of the messages: refers to the intention of alternative media messages. In line with this, the stories analyzed and interpreted with their informative, commentary and critique, mobilizing and politically challenging nature. In addition, their tone is characterized as oppositional, supportive or neutral.

Sources of the messages: the individuals, groups or institutions that originate the messages analyzed and interpreted in this study. The participants in these communication media are discussed under this category.

The Channels and networks of the messages transmission: the modalities and the nets that connected the participants of alternative media communications. Identification and analysis of how these communications take place was accordingly treated under this section.

Forms of the messages: herewith the genres and type of expressions employed in the alternative media messages are analyzed under two major folk genres— oral narratives and oral poetry.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Data Presentation, Interpretation and Findings

In order to analyze messages of alternative media that have been communicated in Addis Ababa since 2005 to 2010, the study collected data from different sources. In this chapter the data are analyzed and presented with the findings. In the first part of this section, the data are presented and interpreted, to be followed by findings from the analysis.

4.1. Data Presentation and Interpretation

The messages selected for the purpose of this study are those related to political issues communicated via alternative small media in Addis Ababa since 2005. When it comes to the arena of political communication, one of the major contemporary issues of the 21st century is thought to be democratic principles. Accordingly the presentation and interpretation of such messages may be of paramount importance for the wellbeing of all mankind in the contemporary world.

The political messages that circulated in the alternative media of Addis Ababa since 2005 appeared in different forms. Among others, however, only some folk forms are in focus of this study. The folklores that carried out modern political messages are exchanged on different social occasions and in diverse forms. Since it is difficult to incorporate all political messages conveyed in these media in a study of limited space, making selection and analysis of representative samples may be inevitable. For the purpose of this study, therefore, only sample texts of jokes, folk songs and oral poems that are performed in Amharic and English were selected and analyzed.

As indicated above, the messages were exchanged in different social occasions, including the 2009 Great Run, sport events, and friendly gatherings in coffee houses and tearooms. In these and such like contexts, men and women of

varied age groups, educational backgrounds, socio-cultural and political networks exchange political messages via words of mouth, print and electronic channels (for example, mobile phone). Some of these are examined in this study.

The examination focuses on the major political issues raised in the alternative media and on how people communicate them in the sphere to shed light on this under researched area of communication study. For ease of understanding, messages contained in the source media are categorized into different themes. Moreover, the nature and sources of the messages, channels, networks and forms of the communication are evaluated under each subsection of the study.

One more methodological note is in order before proceeding to the analysis and presentation of the data. The alternative media are indirect means of communicating with someone in power. The communications often involve sensitive political contents that are usually communicated covertly and within closely related social groups and networks of trust. In such situations, to access information one has to win consent and confidence of the interactants. Correspondingly, taking circumspective measures to maintain the confidence, anonymity and security of informants happens to be an imperative matter of ethical consideration for the researcher.

4.1.1. Sources of the Messages

Sources in the media context can be individuals, groups or institutions that originate messages (Watson and Hill, 2000). Such sources in the alternative small media are not commonly locatable. As Spitulnick (2002) has noted, the messages are everywhere but their origin is nowhere. However, since most of the texts circulated are in the form of folklore and oral literature, they reflect communal thoughts, beliefs and worldviews of groups rather than that of individuals (Finnegan, 1970). The stories, jokes, songs and oral poems in the

alternative media might be produced, reproduced and transmitted by certain individuals or groups; however, they are usually taken as expressions of communal or collective experiences, views, interests, aspirations and anxieties within the social and political arenas at the local community level.

Identities of the sources of many of the political messages circulated in the alternative media and shared among the people in Addis Ababa are generally unknown and kept anonymous to the public. What is important is that people know and use jokes and humorous tales as artistic means to playfully or jokingly comment on and express their views, understandings and value judgments (both positive and negative) of current political parties, issues, practices, activities and personalities in the country. In fact it does not matter whether or not they know who the originators of these popular narratives are. It is only in a few cases that the receivers or participants of the communication receive information from recognized sources. Even in that case they might not be able to identify the individual or group accountable for production and circulation of the stories. Rather one may make out only the closest guess. It is worthwhile to explore each type of the alternative media messages in circulation since 2005 for better understanding of the matter under study.

Folk songs are often performed within small groups during such social occasions as the Great Run and other sport events. Even in such actual performance contexts, it is difficult to attribute the individual participants or performers as originators of the songs. All members of groups participating in the sport events can be considered as performers and sources. Such attribution might be applicable to songs that are performed on a specific occasion for the first time. But it might not be the case always. As one of my informants who had participated in the 2009 Ethiopian Great Run testified, many of the poems in the songs performed on that particular event were not originated there. They were rather reproductions/recreations of previous performances in other occasions. Collective productions are known to be

modified and repeatedly performed to fit the particular occasion in which they occur, and to express political views or agendas of the specific group among which they are communicated (Fekade, 2006).

The jokes in the alternative media are collected from different individuals in the city. However, the people who tell the jokes are neither originator of the messages, nor are they able to attribute them to other originators. Some of them can point to somebody that told them the story, but they are not sure whether that person is the originator or not. As it is learned from the interviews and observations, in such contexts attention is paid not to who said it, but on what has been said. The participants seem to pay hardly any attention to the identities of original sources or producers of jokes. Most importantly, there is no fixed role observed as a producer or a consumer, which is commonly observed in the mainstream media. Since the information flow is multi-directional, one who receives (listens to) a certain joke may also act as a distributor for others. Those others may also redistribute it to others, and the circulation goes on in such a way.

The obscurity of the sources is also a common feature for the mobile phone SMS, Bluetooth and infrared message circulations. The SMS's may have a relatively better chance to be attributed to someone. However, the chain of the message exchange is very long and complex to reach back to the original source. The Bluetooth and infrared messages, on the other hand, are spaces where several political message exchanges take place. However the exact sources of the stories are not recognizable. There are many multimedia messages transmitted in these channels but most of the consumers could not be able to point out the sources, except doing the closest guess.

Based on the data collected, the closest guess about originators depends on the contents of the messages. The potential sources could be implied from people who may hold and reflect on the messages contained. Following that it could be

possible to refer sources by clusters like members or supporters of opposition or ruling parties, people angered by certain political decisions or events, and so on.

Generally, since these media are public vehicles of communication, rather than private properties owned by individuals or organizations, everyone in the community can be a source (producer) or receiver of the messages as far as s/he is in the established networks. This participatory form by and large falls in line with Vatikiotis's (2005) democratic participant media theory, which involves the non-professional masses and is handled by the masses themselves.

4.1.2. The Channels and Networks

According to Spitulnik (2002), the small alternative media communication modalities show new forms that blend mass and interpersonal (popular) media. Correspondingly, in Addis Ababa the media consist of interrelated channels of communication that range from simple words of mouth interaction to different machine-assisted transmission in the interpersonal and mass media structure. They use both traditional channels like different verbal genres, and modern channels including up-to-date technologies like mobile phones for message exchange, production and transmission.

The political messages considered in this study are communicated in different media forms. The messages got around from one person or group to another orally and also electronically. In face-to-face communication the oral/aural transmissions of the messages took place in different settings like tea and coffee meetings, leisure time occasions, different gatherings, rallies, etc. On those occasions, people are accustomed to sharing information over a wireless connection, on which message production and transmission takes place easily and quickly.

Most of the jokes, folk music and poems collected for this study appeared orally in interpersonal and mass forms. The jokes mainly were transmitted by word of mouth from one person to another on different social occasions and circulated through the public arena in analogous channels. The folk music and poems became visible when they were performed for mass consumption and distribution. Messages pass to the mass audiences and attendees of the quarters as audiences receive information and sometimes take up their role of imparting their agendas too on the spot in the form of participatory dialogue. Apart from those channels, some oral poems appeared written in public places like taxi seats and toilet walls.

On the other hand, most electronic messages that I have collected were exchanged via mobile phone Bluetooth and infrared. Since these technologies require only the gadget with such services (this means that the customers were not expected to pay a service charge for their consumption), vast utilization for political dialogues is observed. It may be because of the attractions these communication modalities have, in addition to their capability to keep the anonymity of the sender or sources, in contrast to SMSs. Since most messages of the media are oppositional to the government, people want to be anonymous in the production, distribution and consumption of these media messages. The compatibility of the technologies to exchange multimedia messages like audio, video, and picture messages might be another factor in their popular utilization. As a matter of fact, in this study only the audio political messages are selected for analysis.

Mobile phone SMSs are the other electronic forms employed for personal and mass political message exchanges in Addis Ababa since 2005, until it was banned on June 10, 2005, following the May 2005 election dispute. According to different sources, SMS was barred because the Ethiopian government claimed that the opposition party, CUD, was exploiting it for election campaigns and to organize demonstration activities after the election. The sole

service provider, Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation (ETC), lifted the ban on SMSs in 2007, and it is on track again for political and other public communication since then.

SMSs can be used as a mass media to send out a number of messages to a large population, as it was employed by the opposition party CUD before and after the 2005 election, and also by other parties in the 2010 election. The “*CUD will win*” SMS was the most popular and widely broadcast message before the 2005 national election and was found in many informants' mobile phones. Following the disclosure of the election results, many protests organized by CUD used mobile SMSs. Messages like, “*no one should go to work tomorrow to show opposition to the election result*” and similar messages were mailed from different antagonists. In the 2010 election as well, the EPRDF and Medrek sent campaigning messages using SMSs.

Through whichever channel the communication is done, circulation of small alternative media messages require already established communication networks like friendship, kinship, neighborhood, membership of ethnic group, political party, profession, religion, and so on in which to work (Spitulnik, 2002, Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi, 1997, and Fekade, 2006). As literature in this area describes, and as it is identified from the data, such established connections have their own protocols that work with trust. The information goes around the trusted group members freely but is highly covert for ‘outsiders’. Unwritten and invisible rules guide who is an insider and who is an outsider. Having some network or being in relation with the members might not be enough sometimes. Being a trusted member is essential. The information exchanges can go smoothly if members in the network have confidence in each other for not passing the information exchanged there to government officials or other concerned bodies. If someone does not gain that dependability, they will be excluded systematically from the communication

sphere. Accommodation as trusted audience or member in the invisible network is a compulsory condition to receive messages with political contents.

During data gathering, it was a big challenge for the researcher to gain the trust people needed in order to impart political messages even after they are informed about its research purpose. Most of my subjects that convey the messages informed me that they were providing the information because I came through a person they trusted implicitly. These inform of the invisible network- the trust that chained them and how strong it is.

Generally, the channels in Addis Ababa's alternative small media since 2005 are diversified, and their utilization ranges from traditional channels like the oral medium to the modern technologies of mobile telephones. In addition, the dialogue in the media is less direct with agents of the state and works in less visible networks.

4.1.3. Nature and Tone of the Messages

Alternative media messages in their nature could be informative, commentary and critical, mobilizing and also politically challenging (Sreberny-Mohammodi and Mohammadi, 1997 and Spitulnick, 2002). The different nature of the messages is usually reflected in the messages' oppositional, supportive or neutral tones.

Different alternative media messages in Addis Ababa demonstrated the different natures that range from sharing information to mobilizing and challenging the existing political system. The messages are treated based on the dominant nature they exhibit, since it is not plausible to organize them into one and only one category as if each showed only a single nature.

There are messages which have an informing nature about the main agenda of the time. The most important agenda addressed to the people through the messages that are produced and disseminated following the political heat.

During election time, messages about the election and about some important topics converse highly. For example in the pre election periods of 2005 and 2010, the alternative media keep educating the audiences about the political parties and the election process. After election follow informing what went wrong and right in the election.

The media effort to educate the audiences for making informed decisions is revealed. There are stories that are intended to instruct the public about whom they should vote for and the criteria they should consider before the election. The intentions in other after election stories, on the other hand, seem to inform about the mischief that happened during the election. In this regard it seems they are playing the surveillance role of media.

There are also several stories which try to keep the audiences updated with political information. Stories about different policies, crises, good governance issues, human rights and soon have predominantly informational natures. The messages include poignant stories which state owned media ignore or cover systematically like electric power failures in the country and the reason behind them.

Significant numbers of the messages also have a commenting or criticizing nature. Many of the messages mainly criticize the state in power. However opposition political parties and their leaders are not exempted from critics in the sphere. These critiques and comments on the government and the political system are presented in various forms that range from mere humorous comments to sharp insults and curses.

There are also messages of the alternative media which have a challenging and mobilizing nature in the sphere. Especially some folk poems come into view with opposing tone. Also strong resistance voices heard in the verses that try

to say 'enough to any uneven actions to democracy.' The folk songs projecting resistance against the government show the courage to be mobilized as well.

Another common nature of the messages in the alternative media is the entertaining aspect of the stories. In many of the cases, the messages pass their intended purposes through stories that have some funny and amusing features.

To sum up, the alternative media messages in Addis Ababa since 2005 have informative, commenting, criticizing, mobilizing and challenging natures. Regarding their tones, they dominantly exhibit opposition to the government in power and other political actors. However there are also stories which reveal support for parties they favor.

4.1.4. Forms of the Messages

The political messages that have circulated in Addis Ababa since 2005 have several forms. Among these, the majority appeared in folk or indigenous forms. These traditional ways of expression are employed for modern political messages transmission in the arena.

The most-employed forms of expression and those selected for this study can be categorized into two major folk genres. In the first category are the narratives which appeared in the form of joke or humorous tale. In the second one, folk poems and songs are incorporated. In the second category, *Menezuma (Zakir)*, praise and curse verses (*mirikatina ergeman*), popular songs, verses in graffiti and couplets are included. As a general feature, all have entertaining elements for their audiences. In addition, the messages appear in a variety of forms including oral, print and electronic forms.

4.1.5. Themes of the Messages

Without doubt media messages of any nature have their own peculiar themes as their central or dominant points. The messages contained in a given media are determined based on the purposes desired to be achieved by the sender. Political messages are one of such purposeful communications aimed at accomplishing political goals. Since media are central vehicles of politics and its communication process, they convey several political messages for particular and diversified purposes. Such purposeful communication can be made by any media, either conventional or alternative as far as it has rooms for political discourses.

As one form of media, alternative small media have different agendas to set in their communication spheres. Precisely, politics is one of the major agendas. In a way that is appropriate to this presupposition, it is common to observe the widespread circulation of several political messages in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, with the aid of the available alternative media domain. Democratic issues as the main agendas of current communication media discourse are also immensely conversed in these alternative media.

The concern of this section would be, thus, presentation and analysis of the message contents. Based on the data collected, they are categorized in the following major themes according to the central issues they pose. The main agendas of the messages are: election, governance, political parties, human right, and the mainstream media. Each category in turn has its own sub-themes and analyzed accordingly.

4.1.5.1. Election

Election is one of the major elements of democratic political systems. Since Ethiopia is on the way to an Emerging Democratic System, democratic

elections has been exercised in the country since 1995 (African election data base, 2007).

During election, communication media serve certain functions (McNair, 2003). It informs voters to make knowledgeable decision. It also reports on election campaigns of different political parties, the process and results. Accordingly, from messages circulated in Addis Ababa alternative media sphere, since 2005, many raise election as an agenda. Having election as a principal area, pre and post election messages entertain diverse public agendas. The election processes, its opportunities, challenges, failures at each period were in dialogues of the alternative media sphere.

I. Pre- election messages

One of the common phenomena in pre-election periods is campaigning to gain support. Accordingly, many of the alternative media messages in 2005 and 2010 pre-election periods illustrate this spirit. As any campaign messages appreciating and scandal parties is the commonly observed focus of the stories. Some also reflect enthusiastic ambition to see the Election Day, taking it as a day that brings a change they aspire. And the rest shows pessimism to the election by forecasting the elections' futility.

From messages that have a purpose of promoting different political parties to gain the favor of their supporters' votes, the following may show what was conversed in the alternative sphere. The messages are in support of the ruling party, the People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (here after, EPRDF) and one of the opposition parties, Mederek. These mobile phone text messages were exchanged in Addis during the week and the day the 2010 national election takes place.

❖ *Vote for the bee,
If you wish to make your life as sweet as its honey*

❖ *your life certainly be as sweet as honey,
if and only if you vote for the Mederek!*

Both messages are advocating their parties and also have an intention of informing others whom to support. In the first metaphorical expression the party (EPRDF) expressed in smiley with its election symbol (i.e. bee) and tries to inform, voting for EPRDF mean making life as sweet as the honey of the bee. In the second messages also the SMS with similar structure tries to announce the only way to have better life is through voting for Mederek.

In similar manner there were several messages communicated in the 2005 national election. From such messages, those promote Coalition for Unity and Democracy (here after, CUD) takes the lion's share. In these, CUD presented as it is the pride of the country and voting for it is a way to create a job opportunities for those without job. Since lack of job opportunity is one of the serious problems among the youngsters, as some informants stated, the agenda rose in the election campaign. Their belief on the party they are supporting to address this problem reflected in this pre-election oral poems circulated among them. The pride the supporters have on their party, CUD, also expressed in the couplets.

❖ *Let it be in unison when we arise to vote for CUD
Because all the jobless will be engaged on workⁱ*

❖ *Motherland you deserve to be proud
Because you have given birth to a child like CUDⁱⁱ*

The poems promote to vote for CUD, since it will solve their problems of employment and also it is a party which has good vision for the country.

However, messages in support of different party are not always presented in mere appreciative forms of the parties in favor. There are many which articulate their support by criticizing and condemning the activities and agendas of the opponents. The next folk poem can reveal this.

❖ *Forgive me Melese, Forgive me EPRDF,
I am not comfortable with every CUD's agendaⁱⁱⁱ*

The poem was told in the pre 2010 election period. According to the informant who impart this poem, CUD's internal flux after 2005 election, people who was supporting it or have a tendency of supporting starts leaning to be suspicious about its agenda. So, the poem is an expression of this uncomfortable feeling. In the same way those who are against the EPRDF articulate their refusal to vote them referring the actions they perceived as awful and generate the antagonism.

❖ *Such as these [EPRDF] who never believed in the Country's development,
And who never take pride in the nation's flag,
who never cared about the citizens' dignity,
Begged to be voted not being so ashamed at all?*^{iv}

The ruling party, EPRDF blamed by some part of the society for not giving the required value to the nation's flag. "In the Ethiopians culture the flag of the nation mean a lot for the people, it is pride, grace, symbol of identity and unity, something the people give their life . . .", as one of the informant describes. So the people with such position look intolerant and consider it as not keeping the dignity of the citizens'. As it is reflected in the poem, respect to the flag and citizens as very important requirement rulers expected to hold. People in the group seem to be say, it is not appropriate to vote for the one who didn't respect the flag of the nation; rather to feel ashamed if it wishes to be elected.

Similar opposition on the ruling party is expressed in contrast with the major opposition party illustrated in the following verse which is circulated among some resident of Addis before 2005 election. In the message relinquish of some individuals to tolerate the rule of EPRDF is out loud. Their aspiration for change is clearly stated in the poem.

❖ *Woyane (EPRDF) my body is unable to carry you, get off my back
My beloved CUD come and be at my back*^v

All the oral poems, generally illustrate that, the party which are not favored are disapproved from getting support either by their political agendas or performance they had already showed.

Other than supporting and opposing parties who are competing in the election, there are stories which comments on the general process of the election. The following joke, collected from educated adults' discussion, reflects their pessimistic opinion about the election 2010. The individuals holds cynic look by forecasting the unfairness of the election.

❖ **Joke: The training**

Two friends are chatting. In the middle, one asked the other:

A: *whom do you think will win in the coming election?* **B:** *which election?*

A: *Is there any other election than the coming national election?* **B:** *Oh, are you saying the training* **A:** *what are you talking about?* **B:** *I mean, I don't even consider it as election since there is no enough and strong opposition parties to compete with the ruling party.*^{vi}

The election criticized in the joke for its inefficiency and lack of enough and adequate competition. To describe the situation the criticizer portray the election as training which takes place without opponents before the actual competitions takes place.

As another challenge of elections, criticisms were heard on unfair and unreliable promises of different parties in their election campaign. In the next humorous story, it could be possible to see how the promises and the actual performances of the parties never matched. The gap between the promises and the practices is symbolized by the difference between heaven and hell.

❖ **Joke: It was an election Campaign**

A man died and his soul was taken to God. When he reached there, he was told to visit both heaven and hell so that he could decide where to spend his eternity. Therefore, it was arranged for the man to visit hell first. The moment he approached to gate, the Devil gave him a warm welcome and took him inside. There, he saw all his old friends gathering, drinking, playing pools. Seating and spending a very pleasant time. In his next visit, he went to heaven. He was shocked to see the people there praying, praising God, asking for a blessing... all day long. He then reached to a conclusion to join hell where he thought he would find some fun. As of his agreement, he was taken to hell the next day. This time the Devil was naked and very scary. He hit him with a strong rope and threw him inside. Half of the body of his friends' was in fire and they were suffering a lot with all their satanic rites. He asked what has happened to the fun he saw the other day and was told that it was an election campaign.^{vii}

The sharp criticism in this humors story revealed how political parties cheated voters with false promises. It indicates the pre-election actions and arrangements looks making hell heaven which is unattainable. As it is a situation in two extremes, parties that won in the election acted differently and forgot promises. The purpose of the story looks reminding the parties to work as they promise before competing for election and also to alert citizens not to be trapped by the trick.

On the other hand, some messages have had a content which is optimistic and projected the election as opportunity to bring all the desired changes in Ethiopia regardless of its problems. The following two couplets heard from adults in one of the Addis Ababa bars about 2005 election.

- ❖ *Woe to the army of EPRDF
Because of the upcoming election, 2005^{viii}*

- ❖ *No matter how the member of EPRDF is one that forsakes just for money
CUD is going to be the winner with such easy beginning^{ix}*

As it is projected in the poems, the election in is described as an opportunity to transform the rule. The confidence the public hold about the election, even enable them to warn the party in power, as it is reflected the first poem. In the second, whatever kind of incentive parties' use, the public faith to bring CUD to the power through their voice projected confidently. It is also possible to infer from the messages people are feeling in the democratic process their participation has contribution and the election is the reflection of that.

II. Post-election messages

After any election takes place, the government, political parties and other public organizations are going to evaluate the election process and the result. Based on their analysis and criteria, it is common to judge the election as democratic or undemocratic. Media cover all these appraisals in their stories.

Likewise, alternative media were observed doing the evaluations and the reporting in their own way. In their stories contents incorporate information about what happened, how, why and so forth. It seems the alternative communication media are trying to play a watch-dog role in the process.

Based on the data I have collected both national elections post-election issues were among the agendas of the alternative media. From these, many are criticisms on the rationality of the election. The communications of the public done in a form of jokes, folk music and SMSs in different occasions raise different issues.

In both 2005 and 2010 election, there were stories about unfair voting procedures among which there are theft of votes of the public by the ruling party and the unfairness of the election poll. The following humors story of the 2010 post national election can be quoted for what was conversed among the sphere.

❖ **Joke: Already corrected**

There was a man who voted for CUD by mistake while his intent had been voting for EPRDF. It's a pity that he realized his mistake the moment he reached home. Accordingly so as to correct his mistake went back to the polling station immediately. Thus he explained his mistake to the observers in charge of the election and demanded to be allowed to correct it. To this they replied, "Don't worry, we've already corrected it!"^x

At least as a reflection of some part of the society, this story show how people think about the drama behind the curtain to misuse public voices takes palace. This can imply, though we voted for the party we are supporting; it will be changed and browbeaten by the ruling party. The critics in the joke also directed to the observers whom normally expected to be independent. People exchange such kind of jocks in different social gatherings, like bars and commented on the topic in different ways. So they build up some kind of judgments about the election and its result as in the following poem.

- ❖ *After all these nine kinds of lies gathered in his [the ruling party] pocket
Said he “I have won” so as to be enthroned by himself^{xi}*

The public evaluated the election as irrational and seems to refuse the results. In their media the people try to say, the winner wins by lie and positioning in the power doesn't come out of the peoples vote. Following this, some comic stories created by reworking the appraisals of the state. For example, when the mainstream media announced EPRDF's victory by 99.9%, the following funny and satiric story buzzed in bars of Addis.

- ❖ *EPRDF said that the party wins by 99.9% in the 2010 election. Is that a result of grade 8 national examinations? We know such a result like 99.9 % only in ministry certificate, never in election throughout the world.*

The critic looks point up the exaggeration and unreliability of the result other than the disobedience in the election that are confronted in the above stories. Generally the jokes and the oral poems indicated in their themes that the process and the poll of the elections were not fair and free.

As a post elections messages, there were also several stories told by the Addis Ababa residents following the instability that was instigated in the aftermath of the disclosure of 2005's election result. CUD rejected to accept the result of the election saying there was mischief and the vote of the people is corrupted by the ruling party. Subsequently, the party was started to organize protests in the city. The situation could not be stopped at this stage and what happened at the time was expressed by the following consecutive folksongs.

- ❖ *Let alone motivated by CUD,
The young is known by ground-breaking from the starts^{xii}*
- ❖ *One of the consequences of the election in May is
That it brought Agazi to massacre the nation^{xiii}*
- ❖ *Addis has been known by its tranquility
With the coming of Agazi the city turned out to be a mess^{xiv}*
- ❖ *the cruel Woyane, talks about Interhamway named after the genocide in
Rwanda,*

But who itself is paradoxically involved in firing weapons at the innocent students in May and June^{xv}

In the first verses the mobilization of the youngsters by the CUD and their motivation for political change is conversed. Following the movement there were a crises management intervention by the government. The state in power had to command its soldiers, popularly known with the name of Agazi, on duty to handle the situation. As it is reflected in the poem as a consequence of the election may 2005, people were massacred for expressing their resistance to accept the result in different ways. The stories in the third and forth poems also showed that the situation messed up Addis and the massacre of innocent citizens as it happened in Rwanda.

For the chaos the public in the alternative media accuse government, represented by the Prime Minister Meles and the election board mainly. The blame is more serious on the Ethiopian election board, since it should be independent and handle the election fairly.

❖ *Why do we need to assassinate Meles,
If there would really be one you like to kill, it must be the Electoral Boar.^{xvi}*

After all these, it looks by losing hope, the alternative media messages started to question the country in personification for what happened and report for it what was going on in the following verses.

❖ *Oh my country, Ethiopia what a fool are you?
The one we have given our vote is no more and the thief came to be a winner.^{xvii}*

❖ *Arise this Country known by poverty, let you be now charged
For you brought Woyane (EPRDF) and murdered your patriot.^{xviii}*

After questioning different stakeholders for the corruption of the election, people started to interrogate the country in general for not standing for the public vote and for the massacre of citizens by the ruling party.

Generally, in the alternative media issues of election conversed highly with different focuses. Many of the voices heard about the 2005 and 2010 national elections are oppositional towards the processes and the results.

4.1.5.2. Governance

Governance is known to be the activity of governing and in such kind of activity government and its officials, as actors of the process, play their own role by getting involved in decision making and implementation at different levels (Abrahamsen, 2000). As contemporary discourses, good governance has become among the main agendas, in the 21st century. Characteristically, in good governance, the activity of governing is expected to be participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and marked by following the rule of law.

In the alternative communication media in discussion, there are significant number of jocks, folk music and poems (couplets) which deal with governance and principles of good governance. Among these the messages are dominantly deals with government administration and malfunctions.

Government is assumed to be an important and chief organ in the governing process and hence its activities are found to be conversed in the alternative small media of Addis widely. In that, the current government of Ethiopia EPRDF and its administration at different levels have been exposed to comments, criticisms and condemnations. In many of the jocks, folk music and poems voices are often oppositional.

To look in detail the specific comments raised on different administrative levels, it could be logical to start with the parliament, which is the house of people's representatives at national level. Since it is a place where important and key decisions passed on, parliament and its activities critically scrutinized by the people in the sphere and the media they owned. Communicators of the

alternative media commented the activity there against the responsibility the members have as representative of the public.

The following story could be a reflection of the public opinion, who accused some members of the parliament inefficient engagement in the house's activities.

❖ **Joke: The parliament member who sleeps**

One of the parliament members was observed negligent and inattentive in the middle of hot discussion in the house. So the waiter asked him, "My lord, may I serve you with coffee?" The man awakened from his half sleep and replied scrubbing his eyes, "no, I don't want! It prevents me from sleeping!" he said.^{xix}

Some members' inactiveness in important decision makings is symbolized by sleep in the joke. The public looks criticize its delegates for neglecting their responsibilities. As it is reflected in other jocular too, there is a contemplation to consider them as puppet in the ruling system. Though they are in the parliament to work for the people, they look forgetful of their responsibilities, the critic raised.

The issue of being irresponsible from government side is also reflected in other stories in different occasions. The following folk music performed by young runners in the year 2009 Ethiopian Great Run rally is one of its types. Some participants of the rally utilize the gathering as a chance to express their oppositional political views after some period of time. Using this sport occasion they used to raise their political agendas, in relatively direct dialogue to the state in power. Different popular music utilized for such expression after they reworked to fit with the up to date political agenda. Some participants of the rally even started to consider the occasion, as a relatively free board to manifest their oppositional political views. From several issues raised in that context the following verses of the oral music deals with the administrative responsibilities of the government. So, let's have a look at it.

❖ *What did Dergue say?*

*No way to compromise on the sovereignty of my Country
Better to die than letting others take way a plot of land
What did Mele (Melese) say?
You can take the whole portion of the land
You can also take the port if you wish
But no surrender when it comes to my power^{xx}*

The opinion the above folksong contained, criticize the existing governments for lack of maintaining the sovereignty of the country. The message might come out from groups which have compliant on *Bademe's* land and port *Aseb's* belongingness to Eritrea. Since the places were Ethiopia's territories previously, these people condemn the rulers not to keep that. In the poem, securing the power is presented as the sole concern of the government. The regime criticized for its stumpy concern for the port and the boarder land of Ethiopia which even reserved by the pervious dictator rule, Derge. The port and the boarder land are seized from the country are legal decisions but looks sore conclusions for the citizens who oppose that. So, the public raise such issues in different occasions again and again, through varieties of expressions.

Government's interference on other countries affair was also an agenda of the alternative media political conversation regarding administration. In connection with the Ethiopian soldiers' mission in Somalia in 2008/9, different judgments passed on the government in the alternative arena. After the mission accomplished and the soldiers get back home, some young runners in the 2009 Ethiopian Greet Run rally, reflected on the situation by a song. The song performed on the rally by reworking the popular Amharic songs called '*yete hadesh neber*'(where were you?).

❖ *Where were you?
Somalia..... Somalia .. Daddy...Somalia
What have you brought with you?
Shame.... Shame. ... Daddy... Shame
How dare you...
Here enemies is landed through Somalia
Here enemies is landed through Eritrea
Here also enemies is landed through Sudan^{xxi}*

The public, who opposes the mission in Somalia, perceived the government's action as pointless and disreputable. The claim is that there are some other serious problems in the country that should get attention. The problem in Eritrea and Sudan borders are the agendas that should get attention as to these people prioritizations, on the time.

Apart from the issues discussed above there are agendas like government's internal instability, deception with the international community, dictatorship, violation of citizens rights to work and live freely, and need of governmental transformation and so on in the spheres. Among these, the following audio messages exchanged through mobile phones using Bluetooth could be taken as an example. It is presented in culturally known blessing and curse (*mirikat ena ergeman*) form. The men who lead the ritual dictate the followers to say 'amen' to what they are saying. Though the message circulated originating from anonyms source, the opinion seems the idea of business men who expelled from their trade. In the long curse verses many governance issues were raised and government is condemned for its wrongdoings in different areas. Just to look at some of the important stanzas:

❖ **Say Amen to that**

<i>Let EPRDF be empoisoned.</i>	<i>Amen</i>
<i>Let its tongue that he uses to deceive foreigners,</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Be tied and let it lose its tooth</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>So that the country finds its tranquility.</i>	<i>Amen.</i>
<i>As it expelled us out of the big mall, Merkato</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>And turned us to null, let EPRDF be zero</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Even below that</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>And denied our right to work and live</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Let EPRDF be dismantled.</i>	<i>Amen</i>
<i>Ye, patriots,</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Unite to attack and overthrow the government</i>	<i>Amen. ^{xxii}</i>

It is common in the culture to curse opponent especially if the curser is powerless to attack the enemy in some way. Cursing can be taken as a weapon for the powerless. Accordingly these public as powerless entity, in comparison

with armed power, used it to attack and show the opposition and challenge the government. In the story several curses pass on the government for its failure in different administration area like: deception, instability, not to keep every citizen's right to work and live freely. Based on that, they pass their wishes for the government to be cracked and dismantled. The message also tries to instigate and encourage the people to remove the government from power.

Other good governance issues like unequal treatments for all citizens and corruption are raised as a topic of discussion. The following poems that are collected from a certain governmental organization's toilet wall put this issue in the following way.

❖ **'Green- card'**

*Oh! You fellow people of mine, a strange trouble and affliction have emerged
A job of time has demanded a 'green-card'^{xxiii}*

❖ **Membership**

*A member of a political party (EPRDF's), just like a tree planted by the rivers of
water
Survives ever flourishing, and its flower shall not wither^{xxiv}*

❖ **Corruption**

*Up there, over there, to the lords of the village
How come one dares to approach walking on foot alone but with something in
hands?^{xxv}*

As pointed out in the poems, some civil servants feel that they don't get equal job and other opportunities because they are not member of the ruling party. Holding the identification card of membership described as very important document like green-card, other than being Ethiopian citizens. The 'Green-card' and 'membership' stories articulated the time is only for politically affiliated with EPRDF. The messages also have accusation spirit on government for being only in favor of its party members. In addition, the complaint about the tainted bosses they faced in the system expressed in the 'Corruption' poem. These corrupted leaders are perceived as they are very far from the people they

administer and are not working for the poor who can't give the bribe. In all the three stories different forms of administrative corruptions reflected.

Criticisms on government and its administration don't limited to the system. It also goes to specific leaders and reflects on what is wrong with their administration. The following is among the critics about the Head of the government. In the joke, different speeches of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi reworked and combined to comment on the political agendas with his own tone.

❖ **Joke - Interview with the Prime Minister with BBC journalist**

Journalist: honored Prime Minister Meles, how do you look at the inflation in the Country? **PM:** In principle, I glance at it sideways (in hatred). Ministers and their young followers are busy chewing **chat**, making **du'a** (supplication in search of what they want Allah grant them) in order to make the economic crisis futile. **Journalist:** Is this not contradicting your pledge that you endeavor to feed the nation thrice a day? **PM:** It's not contradicting! No matter how it seems impossible to feed the nation thrice a day, since we have set a strategy which lets the nation to starve thrice a day and get away with it sitting idle in contemplation, talking. It's could not be beyond our control at all. As far as it happens to be not an obstacle to the development, the hunger of the nation can never be our adversary. To your amazement, it has enabled us to rescue our nation from anti-health factors such as obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes that are affecting the international community.

Journalist: It's being heard that you will resign by the following election. **PM:** who said so? Me? **Journalist:** yes, you said so. **PM:** out of Meles, such a thing has never come out. It is unfortunate that I don't have any competing antagonist to takeover my position. Consequently you find them calumniating me.

Journalist: But we have once witnessed, in the presence of foreign journalists as well, and took your word for it. **PM:** why do you talk nonsense? Has BBC ever recruited Amharic or Tigrigna speaking journalists? Do you hear me? Let alone leaving such a hot seat, a comfortable throne, see for yourself how much it's difficult to leave the seat of your **bercha** (chat ceremony) by just chewing a bundle of **beleche** (special type of chat). ^{xxvi}

Government's lack of responsiveness for the economic crises, and disinclination to have democratic power promotion, dictatorship, and deception articulated as major themes in the above story. Part of the society, who believes in the rulers' irresponsible actions to solve their problems, accused the leaders. In that the PM perceived as he tries to give futile solution for the food insecurity. The governors' actions are taken as effortless contemplation, which

looks like *chewing chat* and *making du'a* without doing anything. The PM pledge, in the parliament, to endeavor feeding the nation thrice a day, is presented in the story as it is to mean starving thrice a day. Denying such realities also expressed in the joke by reworking the PM speech on the economic crises. During that speech, he said that the inflations are not beyond control. Following that, the joker said the crises are not beyond control and hinder the nation's development, to mean the fact about adversary of the nation's are denied. The justification of the PM on the issue, even pictured as is mocking since it says the hunger can rescue the people from anti-health factors.

The issue of democratic power shift also presents as it is not the will of the rulers. The PM portrait as he is not dear to leave the throne which is comfy and hot by deceiving what he speaks publicly. The comfort the leader feels may imply corrupting the power and dictatorship, since administration is not an easy task and demands scarifying personal comfort. Other than this, unfair accusation of opponents and portraying them as incompetents to rule the country by government quarter ironically raised in the last lines. People who suspected the prime minister's resign in the coming election reflected their concern use such expression. They also try to notify, the head of government reluctance to resign from power bases rubbish rationale like no capable person to take over the rule.

Such a jocular story inherently has satiric explanation that, had one conducted an interview on issues raised above with the PM the questions would be addressed in such a manner. In that the public, who are exchanged the stories; opinions, suspicions, worries, speculations, oppositions, critics etc are reflected.

Apart from such top figures in government, other important officials also are discussed the alternative sphere based on their role in governance. The views

reflected in these messages vary from mere appreciations to sober insult and criticism. And the themes are going around their activities, performances in their position, personalities, manners, malfunctions, good deeds, etc. All the themes are presented either by direct naming of some particular officials or using the general positions of the officers.

From stories told about government officials, it is possible to refer the following joke by youngsters in bars to have an understanding of what is exactly conversed in the sphere.

❖ ***Kinijit (CUD) in English***

A policeman who was on duty after election 2005 was attracted by a loud noise around one hotel. The situation has terrified him, so he rushed into the hotel. "Be quite! To whom do you belong?" the spectators shouted. At a time the crowd replied out loud "We belong to Arsenal!" the police then picked out his walky-talky and asked "Hello Hagos! How do you call kinijit in English?"^{xxvii}

The rumor about governmental officials' poor literacy level is reflected in the above and other similar stories. Of course, it is clear that there cannot be a security person who didn't know such a silly thing. However, people who feels the inefficiency of the securities tries to criticize the inadequacies of certain officials using such humiliating stories. It is important to note here there is also an issue of quandary to assemble having oppositional political views. Such anecdotes, in general have an implication that the incompetence in public administration somehow arises from illiteracy.

From stories that are directed to particular officials, the critic on former Minister for education, W/r Genet Zewedie can be an exemplar. She was condemned for the defects in the educational policy which implemented in her administration. In the poem she was portrayed as hell, following her proper name in Amharic which is *Genet*, meaning paradise.

❖ *They called her Gennet (a paradise), in a name that misfits her performances, They should have better called her hell.^{xxviii}*

The educational policies implemented at different levels were different during her administration. Some, who feels the policies as inadequate, conversed on different social gatherings about the failures of the educational system and condemn the Minister.

In relation with this government policies matters there are also several discussions about the contemporary issues of the time. From these, civil service reforms put into dialogue in different times. Their repeated changes and unconventionality for the servants are among the agendas in the alternative sphere. The following example can illustrate this.

❖ *Oh, there is more to talk about EPRDF's rule
The fashion of a result-oriented (Wetet tekkor), it has passed away
And BPR has emerged now.^{xxix}*

The oral poem was told by civil servant in different occasions, following different policy implementations, like BPR and Result-oriented civil service transformation. The stories intention looks reflecting the exhaustion of the civil servants' about frequent changes in policies.

By discussing all the above mentioned and similar stories, people conversed in the alternative media sphere label the current ruling in the country as poor in governance. This idea illustrated in the following joke.

❖ **Joke: There is only one decayed government we all know**
A student, who suspected as active participant in the students' movement, was caught to be punished and whipped too much. The student could never know the reason for being penalized and asked "why are you punishing me, What wrong have I committed?" the officer replied "you were convicted of defamation for you were observed talking 'it is such a decayed government'" The student replied "but, have I said whether it is this or that government?" the officer responded, "oh! Better find another reason. There exists only one decayed government. You know this and I know this as well" and went on whipping.^{xxx}

The ironic expression in the story try to tell there is immense good governance problems currently. As it is revealed in the message, the current regime perceived by some as it is has perished governance. In addition the story

presented the decadence of the administration is known by everyone in the system including officials themselves. There is also an issue of lack of freedom to hold and express any idea without restriction in the story.

In sum, as agendas of governance the failures in administration commented in the alternative media communication sphere. From the critics in Addis since 2005, the parliament and different officials inefficiency and irresponsible actions, government reluctance to maintaining the sovereignty of the country, unnecessary interference on other countries affair, internal instability, deception, dictatorship, lack of responsiveness for the economic crises, violation of citizens rights to work and live freely, inconsistencies of policies and other administrative corruptions raised as major issues. In the discussions there is an inclination of concluding the governance as perished and recommend for transformation.

In the stories exchanged at least some part of the societies; opinions, suspicions, worries, speculations, oppositions, critics etc are reflected.

4.1.5.3. Political Parties

Political parties' involvements are one of the important activities in multi party democracy so as they are among agendas of political discourses. In line with this, people in Addis Ababa have been conversing about the different political parties and their agenda in the alternative small media. Citizens' support, opposition, and critics on parties, articulated through different messages of the media.

Some political parties which gained attention by the sphere for various reasons and their leaders remarked on the alternative sphere of Addis widely since 2005. The mostly conversed parties are EPRDF, CUD, and United Ethiopian Democratic Forces [UEDF], Medrek. These parties together with their leaders are praised and condemned by the people in the sphere.

The following folksong is one of the messages which were dealt with political parties. The song was performed in Menzuma (Zikr) form after 2005 election and appeared in several informants mobile phone, with unlocatable origin. The story is about the opposition parties CUD and UEDF and their leaders performances during the election.

- ❖ *The names of the citizens who stand for us during this challenge shall be admired and praised in history.*
- Praise to CUD's leader Hailu Shawel, who is firm and devoted to his goals.*
- Praise to Hibret's leader Merara Gudina, who innocently strives for the country's development.*
- Praise to Eng. Gizachew, who could not give up.*
- In spite of the hunger, thirst, jail and surrounding weapon, one who is not afraid of death in his young age, EPRDF's Cadre how are you Lidetu?*
- It's unlikely to find a man of his words in Lalibela (which is Ledetu's home land)*
- Praise to Dr. Yakob who left a huge income in western countries to stand for his country and his people.*
- Praise to Birhanu nega, a great person! There is no wealthy person who always speaks for poor and never be defeated by his enemies.*
- Praise to a charismatic person, Debebe Eshetu who made us all proud.*
- Praise to the only woman Birtukan Demeksa , who was so brave enough to resist all the ups and downs till being sentenced.*
- To all who have been challenged and struggled, History shall commemorate you forever*
- As you were victims of all the killings and injuries; as you died to bring about freedom to your people.^{xxxii}*

Inherently, Menzuma is a spiritual song carried out to praise religious figures. This structure seems to be employed for such purpose to implicate the importance of the parties and their leaders. It may also have an intention of making the mentioned individuals figures in history and give honor. The lead vocalist, as it is heard in the multimedia message, performed it by imitating typical Menzuma singers' vocal and raised issues related to the political parties.

The expectation was that individual party leaders be symbol of their parties honor for their devotion and strive for the country's development, display bravery, have resistance in all up and downs, being mouth of the poor's and so

on. Not only leaders but also supporters which scarified in the 2005 election aftermath praised in the Menzuma since they considered as freedom fighters.

On the other hand, other CUD leader like Lidetu was affronted unlike his collogues because of his decision take a seat in the parliament house following the election result. At that time, there was disagreement between CUD leaders and their supporters. The incongruity comes out of the election result which CUD blamed for its unfairness. According to the Ethiopian Election Board announcement CUD only won for few seats in the parliament. Refusing this result, most CUD leaders, except few like Lidetu, rejected to be in the house to show their opposition. Based on this, supporters of other party's leaders blame Lidetu and individuals who inter to the parliament as cheaters who worked as cadres of EPRDF, the ruling party.

Similarly, in the following folksongs EPRDF and CUD parties' leaders were sullied. This folksong was performed by young runners in group by accompanying by hot cultural dances in the 2009 Ethiopian greet run race.

❖ *Lidetu is a bandit*
Lidetu shall die
Instead of Tedy³ Lidetu should be thrown into prison
Instead of Tedy, EPRDF deserves prison
Instead of Tedy, accuse Melse^{xxxii}

Again in the above song, the CUD's leader, Lidetu was accused for his entry to the parliament and makes him to be considered as outlawed. The runners' aspirations for his demise expressed. Rather than this party leader, they reflected their passion to one singer, called Tewodros Kassahun (Teddy) as political figure. Since Teddy was imprisoned at the time, they had wished Lidetu, Prime Minister Meles and EPRDF to be jailed in his place. In the song, mainly opposition to the some party leaders and EPRDF are reflected.

³ Teddy is a young singer, who perceived as a political figure by many youngsters

On the other hand, some stories explain how the public in the sphere evaluated parties and its representatives. For example the following joke about the election symbol change request could tell how good accomplishments could win the heart and soul of the public than the general party's malfunctions.

❖ **Change your symbol please!**

There used to be a member of EPRDF who had been liked so much for his effort of accomplishment of many development activities. This man, once, had to run an election campaign asking the people to vote for him. Among the gathering that this campaigner stood arisen an old man and started to talk back to him "Ok, we can give you our votes, but we ask you a favor for this, will you change your symbol to fingers (CUD's symbol) please? This is because we agreed not to vote for someone with bee symbol." xxxiii

From this pre 2005 election story, it is possible to connote citizens can be persuaded by good performances even it comes from the party they have strong opposition. It is also implied public support can be gained through good accomplishments in development. However the polarized political positions of Ethiopians still affect voting. As the old character in the story explained there is usually siding collectively to vote only for one party and rejection to the other.

It can also be learned from different stories in different times; the public changes its insight about the political parties and their leaders regularly. It seems they are taking some lessons from different event that have taken place. For example in 2005 pre-election period in many of messages CUD promoted as if it is the only way to bring democracy and good governance in Ethiopia. However after it experienced internal crack and the party leaders' disarray the dialogues changed to refuse the party and its leader for the 2010 election.

❖ *CUD is ten fingers*

Say no..... say stop.....say enough

Tell him the child of Ethiopia is a hero

Since it can't fool him (Ethiopians) by saying there is election here and after!xxxiv

In the above mentioned rally, CUD which was honored and promoted as best party in the country before and immediately after 2005 election, abandoned for

the 2010 national election. The rejection seems came out of the split observed among the parties leaders. In order to express the rip among the rulers, the participants in the rally symbolically expressed it as ‘ten fingers’ after its election symbol two fingers. In addition, they reflected the feeling of being fooled by CUD. It seems regretting about the messes of the previous election; they try to tell their expectation is get down. In relation to this, it is important to remember here CUD was one of the highly promoted party and its leaders are even consider as superman and committed for their countries during the 2005 election. The following oral poem also show similar theme.

❖ *Forgive me Melese, Forgive me EPRDF,
I am not comfortable with every CUD’s agenda*

As it has been reflected in many stories, there was strong opposition to EPRDF in the 2005 election. However after examined some activities of CUD, inclination to EPRDF is observed as it is reflected in the above couplets.

To sum up, in the political parties discussions of the alternative media there is a tendency of focusing on few parties. In that also party leaders and representatives get more attention than the parties themselves. The achievements and the failures of these individuals during 2005 and 2010 elections rose in different ways and examined by residents in Addis.

4.1.5.4. Human Rights

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that all humans should be guaranteed. The right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law are among the major (citation). Since the issue of human rights along with the most important ideals in democratic system, it is also an agenda of the media. In the alternative media this study has undertaken, the agendas of human rights are also situated in the stories as themes.

Stories about human rights, in the alternative media of Addis Ababa, focus on violation against rights to live freely and freedom of expression in the years after 2005. The following jocular story heard from small chatting group in bar has a theme which criticizes the unnecessary life taking. the story read as follow:

❖ **Joke: The 'bandit'**

Journalist: *On different occasions, it's been common to hear that "bandits were killed for attempting to break a Bank." But, we have come to witness here is that there is no Bank at all in this area. Are you not contradicting with such news?* **Authority:** *not at all because our principle is to take necessary steps before any incident as a means of prevention. That is why we shot those bandits are shot before the installation of a new Bank on the area.^{xxxv}*

The story criticizes violation to citizens' right to life for ridiculous reasons. As it is tried to be said through the response of the authority, people punished for the offense didn't commit. Though the principle bylaw is that better to let ten criminals to escape than putting one innocent in trouble, the story exhibit the reverse is happening. The sarcasm in the story illustrated citizens' right sullied even in situations they are living calmly. The context of the story can explain the strength of the violation.

There are also many stories which criticize human rights violations in the city. From these, the story about the federal police proposal to quell riots during election period with boiled water can be taken as another example. In the joke police force ordered to scatter opposing protester that may appear during 2010 election with only water. This suggestion couldn't be acceptable for the police. So they tried to convince the commander to change his mind and allow them to use gun fire. While they recognize that is impossible they propose at least the water to be boiled. The police, who naturally expected to stand for people's right exhibited as main violator in the story. Even though citizens have constitutional right to hold and express their political view freely, they let to be 'cooked' and died in such uncouth way.

Freedom of expression as important human rights issue is in several stories as well. The Right of Thought, Opinion and Expression in Ethiopia are granted constitutionally and by other international laws. In the constitution article 29 it is clearly stated: “Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference.” It is also declared there is right to freedom of expression which includes freedom to seek, receive and impart information.

However in the alternative small media sphere stories reflect as these constitutional rights are not granted practically.

❖ ***You don't have a very long time to live!***

One government authority came to visit the community and delivered his speech. He had to explain all about the aim of the change introduced. One of the young attendants stood up and commented the authority's speech about change is nothing but a pretence that it's common to hear dictators spit out democratic words just like a parrot, though they don't realize it. He added that many leaders including this authority should give their positions to the one that gains the vote of the people. When he finished, the gathering showed its approval with applause that could never be stopped. The authority had never expected such reaction and said for the young, “you speak very well. But you don't have a very long time to live” and evacuated immediately.^{xxxvi}

The story reflects holding and expressing opinion which opposes government authorities may lead someone to lose his/her life or at least to be threatened and terrified. Even if the opinion supported and applause by the society and it don't have any legal limitation, or harm on human dignity, it is limited by government officials, if it is antagonist to the authorities' idea and expectations. Some who suspect direct dialogue holding opponent idea may cause some harm express their fear in similar stories.

The public in such feelings consider formal political discussion boards are unsafe to reflect their oppositions. So that using the alternative means communicate their views in different social gatherings which do perceived as less scrutinized spheres. The events are taken as breathing space for oppositional political expressions. From such occasions Great Run rallies are

under utilization through time and this witnessed by the following group song of the runners in the 2009 race.

- ❖ *Why Federals..... Why securities
At least let us shout today
At least let us express ourselves this day^{xxxvii}*

This folk music was performed by participants, who acted as begging the federal police and the security people to let them free and out loud what they need to say at least for a day. This also implies saying, there is no way to put across our opinion on other days. Even they consider the great run track suit (which overloads 40 birr) fee as a fee to gain freedom of speech and democracy for a single day. On the race this was expressed in the following stanzas.

- ❖ *We find this (the freedom to express) with our 40 birr
Our 40 birr our freedom
Our 40 birr our democracy
Our 40 birr our only way to speak loud ^{xxxviii}*

In all the songs the runners tried to say there are restrictions in freedom of speech and democracy in addition to other issue they raised.

Generally, the dialogues about human rights are dominantly about the violations against right to life and freedom of expression. In that people who communicated in the alternative media bring to the board their most important agendas of human rights since 2005. They convey the suppressions they feel about their basic rights and commented on it in several ways.

4.1.5.5. The Mainstream Media

The media in democratic societies are independent institutions that serve the people. In their watchdog role they monitor undemocratic actions of governments and politicians and report on that. Media in this sense is one of the most important role players in the political system. As much researches finds out (Aadland & Fackler, 2009, Yonas, 2009 and Yetenayet, 2008) and as is reflected in the alternative small media sphere messages in Addis the

mainstream media don't seem good at mediating politics independently and play its watchdog role.

In the alternative sphere, the participants pass their own judgments about the formal media's political role. In that they blamed for lack of independence and truthfulness. Commonly the stories portrait the major television and radio stations as a mouth piece of the ruling party. The critics are even more serious on Ethiopian Television (ETV) national service transmissions. The following exemplar could show how the judgment on ETV is serious.

❖ **Joke- The TV set shrank while ETV lied**

A daughter sent her mother some money and told her to buy a 21-inch television. When the daughter returned to her country, she observed that it was 14-inches and asked her mother why she bought that. The mother replied, "My daughter I actually had been bought the one with 21 inches. However whenever I watch Ethiopian television transmission the TV set shrinks because of the lies they always broadcast. And after it happened repeatedly it appears to be this 14-inch size. Still, I'm glad you to see it at this size because it might disappear after a while because of the lies."^{xxxix}

ETV is represented as non-credible media institution in the alternative sphere. Following that, people try to reject ETV and radio as sources for political news and information. In the above jocular story, the lies of ETV overstated as it shrink the irrational entity- the TV set, let alone human being who can sense. The hyperbole gives power for the critique on ETV about its lack to pursue the truth.

In other forms of the alternative media stories also lack of trustworthiness is entertained. ETV looks like losing its credibility on political reporting. This insight notified in 2009 Great Run public songs of young runners. On the occasion the singing group makes the following remind pointing on ETV journalists.

❖ *ETV, as you always misreported
Don't reduce the number of runners^{xl}*

As people in the sphere claim ETV was reported in 2005 by thinning the number CUD supporters' on the march. Though gaining public credibility very important for any media, ETV seems lacking that. Rather it is considered as media which report inaccurately about oppositional political views.

The critics in some of the cases lead to act aggressively against the media and its workers. This illustrated by the following folk music from the Great Run rally. In the popular music they performed, the runners reflected their temptation to break ETV's cameras that was recording the race. This might be to reflect their anger on the media, and also to express their detestation.

❖ *If we do not respect Haile's words
We will break this camera.^{xli}*

Haile Gebresselasie who was one of the race organizers reminded the participants to behave at the beginning to make the rally nonviolent. Consequently it was only reported that the camera was kept aside to miss its target, to respect Haile's words was what was said in part and nothing else. This indicates the people strong opposition towards the media, since it is not acting freely and fairly.

The mainstream media, especially ETV, generally, was condemned in the alternative media for its lack of independency and faithfulness to the opposition parties. Since 2005, residents in Addis accused it for not reporting the truth about opposition parties in the sphere and reflect their abhorrence for the media in different ways.

Generally, in the sphere of alternative media, many political agendas were entertained among consumers in Addis Ababa. From these, major political themes like elections and governance have been discussed widely since 2005. Other democratic ideals like human rights, freedom of speech, the mainstream

media's political role and the like were also commonly discussed issues in different ways.

4.2. Discussion of Findings

Based on the analyzed and interpreted data, the major political themes posed in the alternative media messages about politics are elections, governance, human rights, political parties and the mainstream media. From these, messages that deal with elections make up the lions' share. Out of 88 messages selected for this study, there are about 36 stories that raise elections as their major theme. Governance is the second most-widely discussed agenda item in the alternative media, with 29 stories. Human rights, mainstream media and political parties with their leaders are also among the most important issues to be communicated in the media with 11, 7 and 5 stories respectively. This implies that in the public sphere, issues related to elections and governance are considered as the most important issues. This could have some signal for the state in power about the focus of public discontent about political issues.

4.2.1. Themes of the messages

Election politics is the most dominant theme in many of the alternative media stories, and it entertains several issues which focus on the pre and post election situations surrounding the 2005 and 2010 national elections. In the pre election messages: criticism on inefficiency and the lack adequate candidates, unfair competition, defective promises by political parties on election campaigns, and the promotion or opposition to political parties in the election are discussed frequently. In addition, the public's enthusiasm to vote using their democratic rights is highly reflected, especially in the May 2005 national election. However, there are also messages that illustrate the skeptical position of some part of the society, which forecasted the elections' futility. In the post election period, on the other hand, the topics of discussion were predominantly about the lack of rationality in the two elections. The major

themes incorporated in the stories revolve around the unfair voting procedures observed, the corruption of the people's vote by the ruling party, the exaggerated percentage of election winning results, and the improper post election crises management intervention by the government. In many of the stories, the critics on the ruling party which won in most part of the nation are very out lauded. In addition, and National Board of Election and other observers were under this criticism.

In the messages that deal with governance: public administration, government activities, policies and their implementations are the foremost themes discussed in the alternative media. Most stories that gave attention to the government and its governance as a theme, posed opinions related to the problems of good governance. The specific problems raised are: the government's weakness due to a lack of sincerity on some issues and a disinclination to have democratic power promotion, acting responsibly to save the public from economic crises and hunger, maintaining the sovereignty of the country, internal instability, unnecessary interference on other countries affair, deception with the international community, violation of individual rights and uneven management. In addition the communicators in the sphere label the current government in Ethiopia as decayed. Based on this, the messages advocate the need to have transformation. In stories that converse about the government officials, on the other hand, opinions on authorities are reflected. Inefficiency of the security officers and some ministers' administration, and also critiques of some key authorities' performances, are the most pronounced themes. On policies and their implementations messages about inconsistency and unsuitability for the civil servants are the major issues raised.

The major themes of the messages on political parties also raise different agenda points to the discussion board of alternative media in Addis. There is a tendency to make many conversations on those few political parties and leaders which they perceived as important. EPRDF, CUD, UEDF, Medrek and

their leaders gets much attention in these media. The CUD's leaders like Dr. Hailu Shawel, Eng. Gizachew, Dr. Yakob, Dr. Birhanu Nega, Debebe Eshetu, Birtukan Middekesa and UEDF's Merara Gudina are praised in the messages for their commitment to the country as it is perceived by those public. The appreciation in some of the cases passes to these leaders in different forms regardless of their parties. In contrast, some political leaders like Lidetu (i.e. one of the CUD's leaders), EPRDF as a party and also CUD after the post 2005 election crises are roundly blamed in the messages.

In human rights stories, violations against human life and the lack of freedom of expression are posed as most important themes. As is reflected in the messages, there are actions that are against the constitutionally granted rights of the citizens like working and living freely. Also, the public complains about the government and the security officials' denial of their right to hold and express opinions using any frontiers.

The mainstream media, with its political aspect, is discussed and evaluated in the alternative media political communication sphere. In the discussion, the main critiques are on Ethiopian Television lack of loyalty and faithfulness to the public on political matters. From the messages it is possible to learn that ETV are not reliable sources of information on politics for people who communicate in the alternative media sphere.

4.2.2. Sources of the Messages

The sources of all the messages circulated within the time frame in the alternative media, on the other hand, are not usually locatable. Though many people receive political messages from different individuals or groups, they are not certain about the originators of the stories. Sometimes they also impart messages that they received from someone without worrying much about the inventor of the messages. In this regard (i.e. acting as a transmitter as well as receiver without restrictions) it is possible to say that these communication

media are freely participatory for everyone in the communication network regardless of sex, age and educational status.

The folk music produced in groups and performed on certain social occasions like the Great Run race is attributed simply to the public. Similarly, the oral poems that appeared in public spheres are considered as belongings of the community which reflect collective opinion and perception. Even the jokes that are mainly heard from individual narrators also are not an exception from being considered group expressions.

The word-of-mouth diffusion of most of the messages and their reproduction on certain sites make pointing out the sources unworkable in most cases. In electronic form messages, like the mobile phone SMS and Bluetooth messages, similar anonymity of the original sources observed.

This participatory nature of the alternative media can be an indicator of its potential to create a more participatory political arena which is indigenous. The trend in alternative media is to have public media which is not owned either by the government or by other big organizations.

4.2.3. Channels and Networks

With regard to the communication channels and networks of the alternative media in Addis, it is observed that a variety of forms and ways are employed. The channels include word-of-mouth transmissions using traditional ways like communicating on different occasions and also mobile phone technologies like Bluetooth and short written texts. The networks among the communicators of media, on the other hand, are difficult to describe clearly, but as it is observed in different situations, are founded on already established networks of friendship, kinship, neighborhood, membership in a similar ethnic group, party, ideology, profession, religion, and so on. Above all, it is learned in this study that people in the sphere connect and communicate freely only with

trusted members. The criteria to be considered a trusted member are unspoken, but are understood by the members.

4.2.4. Nature and Tones of the Messages

The stories of the alternative media with different themes showed diverse nature and tones in their presentation. As is learned from the collected and analyzed messages of this study, the characteristics of the stories range from simple information providing to critical political mobilizations. In between there are a significant number of messages that have a criticizing and commenting nature. The alternative media in Addis inform the residents of the municipality about different political agendas like elections, governance, human rights and political parties with their activities. In this, it seems that they are serving the agenda-setting purpose of mainstream media. In addition to this purpose of educating the public on politics, it is observed that these media try to play the watchdog role traditionally ascribed to the major media. Starting from criticizing the mainstream media and its role, alternative media has transmitted several messages that have censuring and commenting nature on different political issues. There are also messages that have a politically challenging and mobilizing nature. In their intonation, with very few exceptions, all the messages are oppositional to the current government.

The oppositional tones of most stories and their critiques, as well as the politically challenging natures of the messages, may contribute in signifying the gaps of the political arena and how serious they are in some degree. From these the political actors can take some lessons about the public's agenda.

4.2.5. Forms of the Messages

As seen in the messages collected for this study, most of the political messages circulated in Addis since 2005 have folk or indigenous forms. From these folk genres of expressions employed for modern political communications, folk

poems, folk music and narrations are studied in this research. Couplets and graffiti verses are the dominant forms of folk poems utilized in the alternative media arena. From the folk music forms, *Menezuma (Zakir)*, praise and curse verses (*mirikate ena ergeman*) and popular songs are employed. Among traditional narrations, jokes are highly utilized forms. In addition, these folk forms of messages appeared in their oral, print and electronic modes.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Conclusions

This research has attempted to analyze the contents of alternative small media political messages that have been communicated in Addis Ababa since 2005, which address local political issues. To deal with this, the study employed a qualitative content analysis research technique and examined the messages based on their themes, nature, forms, sources and the network and channels they employed to communicate in detail. Based on the evaluation, the research arrived at the following conclusions.

The most discussed political topics in the alternative media sphere of Addis Ababa since 2005 are elections and governance. Human rights, mainstream media and political parties are also among the important concerns of the public who are in the alternative media communication arena.

The results of the analysis show that the stories which address elections, criticize the 2005 and 2010 elections for their lack of rationality and picture them as not fair or free. The absence of good governance at different administrative levels, on the other hand, features in many governance stories. In conversations about political parties, opposition and support of parties' political agendas and their leaders are the main issues. The human rights stories pose violation against human life and lack of freedom of expression as a major failure in the political system. The mainstream media, especially ETV, which are expected to serve the public and pursue truth on the political issues criticized in the media, do not act accordingly.

The messages with the above mentioned themes mostly exhibit opposition to the current political system. In doing that, the criticizing, mobilizing, challenging and informing nature of public opposition is reflected in the stories. In addition, the communication takes place 'secretly' within certain established networks. The channels utilized also vary from traditional oral form to new

technologies like the mobile phone. However, in the communication media the sources of most messages circulated are not usually locatable. Though many people in Addis receive political messages from different individuals or groups, they are not certain about the originators of the stories. Obscurity of information sources is a common feature for most stories.

Since in the alternative sphere most discussions are about perceived and/or real failures of the current political system, it can inform about the panorama of what went wrong in the city political arena. From these the government and different political actors can gain valuable information about a certain part of the society's perceptions on different political affairs of the time. As has been mentioned several times, because of certain cultural and historical grounds, Ethiopians are accustomed to express their political views through alternative ways (Fekade, 2006). These alternative media, as one of alternative means of voice projection, could help to gain information about the public perception about the political system and its possible failures. This might also indicate what measures should be taken to correct it.

As many scholars agree (Hyden and Leslie, 2002, Graber, 2004), understanding political communications requires looking at it in the context in which it is working. Considering contextual factors like culture, politics, economy, technology and history are very important to have a proper analysis. Generally in Africa and specifically in Ethiopia, cultural and historical factors have made alternative media consumption for political communication greater than the mainstream media - unlike in the western nations (Hyden and Leslie, 2002, Fekede, 2006). This peculiar characteristic comes out of the dominance of the oral tradition and the relative weakness of formal media institutions. So that as the scholars suggest and as it could be learned from this study, discussions in the alternative media sphere contain information that is helpful in understanding public opinion about different political agendas. The gaps in

communication and the practical problems in different areas of politics can be understood from such dialogue.

On the other hand, political development and participatory communication atmosphere in the country can get inspiration from this alternative communication which is interactive; the public can have dialogue and can participate many.

Generally, it is an advantage for both scholars and government officials to give some attention to these media and the messages exchanged there. Taking this into account, this research investigated what has been said in the media and how it is said to contribute a little in the area. Further research might explore the effects of alternative media on the politics of the country and other related issues, to take advantage of their utilization in the political development of the nation.

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- i ቅንጅትን ስንመርጥ ሁላችን በጋራ በዘኔዎች ሁሉ ያገኛሉ ሥራ።
- ii ኢትዮጵያ ሀገራ ኩሪ ይገባሻል ቅንጅትን መሳይ ሌላ ልጅ ወልደሻል
- iii ኸረ መለስ ማረኝ፤ ኸረ ኢሀዲግ ማረኝ የቅንጅት ነገር ምኑም አላማረኝ።
- iv በሃገር እድገት ጭራሽ የማያምኑ በባንዲራ ኩራት ጭራሽ የማያምኑ በወገንም ኩራት ጭራሽ የማያምኑ ኸረ እንደው አያፍሩም ድምጽ ሲለምኑ?
- v ወያኔ ተመለስ አይችልም ገላዬ የኔ ሆድ ቅንጅት ና ቁም ከኋላዬ።
- vi ሁለት ጓደኛዎች ያውራሉ። አንዱ- በአሁኑ ምርጫ ማን የሚያሸንፍ ይመስልሃል ሲል ይጠይቀዋል። ሌላውም- የቱ ምርጫ? በማለት ምንም እንደማያውቅ ይመልስለታል። ጠያቀውም- ምን የቱ ትለኛለህ አንድ ምርጫ ነው ያለው። መጨረሻ ምርጫ። ጓደኛውም መለስ በማለት- ልምምዱን ማለትህ ነው? መቼም ተውዳዳሪ በሌለበት የሚደረግ የምርጫ ልምምድ እንጂ ትክክለኛ ምርጫ አይመስለኝም።
- vii ሟች ነፍሱ ሰማይ ቤት እንደደረሰ የሰማይ ቤት ዳኞች ገሃነም ወይም ገነት ለመግባት ሁለቱንም ስፍራዎች ጎብኝቶ መምረጥ እንዳለበት ይነግሩታል። በመርሐ ግብሩ መሰረትም በመጀመሪያ ገሃነምን እንዲጎበኝ ይጋበዝና ገና ከበሩ ላይ በመልካም አለባበስ የተስቆመቆጠው ሳጥናኤል በሞቀ ሰላምታ ተቀብሎት ወደ ውስጥ ይዞት ይገባል።
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- viii የዘጠና ሰባቱ ሦስተኛው ምርጫ ለወያኔ ሹሞች ጥሩ መቀጣጫ።
- ix የወያኔው አባል በገንዘብ ቢገዛ ቅኔ ያሸንፋል ጀምሮ እንደዋዛ።
- x አንድ ሰው ቀበሌ ሲመርጥ ኢህአዴግን መምረጥ ፈልጎ በስህተት ቅንጅትን ይመርጣል። ይህን ስህተቱን የተረዳው እቤት ከደረሰ ነበርና ለማስተካከል ወደ ምርጫ ጣቢያው በፍጥነት ተመለሰ። ከዚያም ለምርጫ ታዛቢዎቹ «ልመርጥ የፈለኩት ኢህአዴግን ነበር ነገር ግን ተሳስቼ ቅንጅትን መረጥኩ። እና ለማስተካከል ነበር።» አላቸው። እነርሱም ችግር የለውም already አስተካክለንዋል አሉት።
- xi ዘጠኝ አይነት ውሸት ሰብስቦ በኪሱ አሸነፍኩኝ አለ ሊነግስ በራሱ።
- xii እንኳን ቅንጅቱ በል በል እያለው ቅድሞውም ወጣቱ አመለኛ ነው።

- xiii የግንቦቱ ምርጫ ያመጣብን ጣጣ
ነዋሪውን ለመግደል አግኝቶ መጣ።
- xiv የእኛ አዲስ አበባ ሰላም ነበረች እንዲ
አግኝቷን አምጥተው አሸበሯት እንጂ።
- xv ወያኔ ግፊኛው ከሩዋንዳ ሰምቶ ኢንተርህሞይ ይላል
በሰኔ በግንቦት ንጹውን ተማሪ በጥይት ይቆላል።
- xvi ሽረ መግደልማ መች መለስን ነው
መግደል ካማራችሁ ምርጫ ቦርድን ነው።
- xvii ሀገራ ኢትዮጵያ ሞኝ ነሽ ተላላ
የመረጥነው ቀርቶ የሰረቀው በላ።
- xviii ተነሽ አንች ደሐ አገር፣ ተነሽ ተከሰሽ፤
ወያኔን አምጥተሽ ጀግና የገደልሽ።
- xix አንድ የፓርላማ አባል የጦፈ ወይይት እየተደረገ ባለበት ሁኔታ ስብሰባውን ችላ ብለው ፍዝዝ
ብለዋል። ይህን ያስተዋለ አስተናጋጅ «ጌታዬ ቡና ላምጣልዎ?» አላቸው አዛውንቱ ፖለቲከኛም
ከሰመመናቸው፤ ነቅተው አይናቸውን እያሻሹ «አይ ተወው እንቅልፍ ይከለክለኛል» አሉት።
- xx ምናለ ደርጉ ምናለ?!
ሀገራን ለሰው አልሰጥም አለ
መሬት ለባዳ ሞቴ ነው አለ
ምናለ መሌ ምናለ?!
ዳሩ ድንበሩን ውሰዱት አለ
ወደቡን ሁሉ ውሰዱት አለ
ብቻ ስልጣኔን አትንኩት አለ.....
- xxi የት ሄደሽ ነበር?!
ሱማሌ ... ሱማሌ አባባ ... ሱማሌ
ምን ይዘሽ መጣሽ?!
ቅሌት! ቅሌት አባባ ቅሌት
ምናባሽ የታባሽ! የታባሽ ቆርጦሻል
ይኼው በሱማሌ ጠላት ገብቶብሻል x2!
ይኼው በኤትራም ጠላት ገብቶብሻል x2!
ይኼው በሱዳንም ጠላት ገብቶብሻል x2!
- xxii ኢህዲድን ከርቸሌ ይደርግመው አሜን
ከአጋክዚ ያጋጨው አሜን
ከተለጣፊ ያላትመው አሜን
ፈረንጅ የሚያሞኝበት አሜን
ሕዝብን የሚሸውድበት አሜን
ምላሱም ይታሰር አሜን
ጥርሱም ይርገፍ አሜን
ሃገር ይረፍ አሜን
ሰላም ይሰፈን አሜን
ሱማሌም አይሰጋ አሜን
የእልቂት በር ይዘጋ አሜን
ከመርካቶ እንደነቀለን አሜን
ከአዳራሽ እንዳባረረን አሜን
ንግዱን ሁሉ ተቆጣጥሮ አሜን
እንዳደረገን ዜሮ አሜን
ወያኔ ዜሮ ይሁን..... አሜን በሉ አሜን (2)

xxiii ጌረ እናንተ ሆይ ጉድ መጥቷል መከራ

ግሪን ካርድ ጠየቀ የዘንድሮ ስራ።

xxiv የፓርቲ አባልና የወንዝ ዳር ዛፍ

ሁልጊዜ ይኖራል አባባው ሳይረገፍ።

xxv ተዚያ ሳይ ተዚያ ሳይ ካሰቅቼ መንደር

በእጅ እንደሆነ እንጂ በእግር አይደረፈር።

xxvi ጋዜጠኛ- ክቡር ጠቅላይ ሚኒስቴር መለስ የኑሮውን ውድነት እንዴት ያዩታል? መለስ- በመርህ ደረጃ የጎሪጥ ነው የማየው። የሃገራችንንም ሆነ የአለም አቀፍ የኢኮኖሚ ቀውስን ለማሸነፍ ሚኒስትሮቹ እስከ ወጣት ተከታዮቻቸው ሃይለኛ ቁምሃ ላይ ናቸው፤ ለዱአ። ጋዜጠኛ- ህዝቡ ቢያንስ 3 ጊዜ እንዲበላ እጥረሉሁ ካሉት ጋር አይጋጭም? መለስ- አይጋጭም! በቀን 3 ጊዜ መብላት ባይችል በቀን 3 ጊዜ እየተራብ ግን ርሃቡን በወሬ የሚያስታግስበት ስትራቴጂ ስለቀየሰን ርሃቡ ከቁጥጥራችን ውጪ አልሆነም። የህዝቡ ርሃብ ልማታችንን እስካላደናቀፈ ድረስ ... ርሃብ ዋነኛ ጠላታችን ሊሆን አይችልም። እንደውም የአለም አቀፍ ህዝብ በውፍረት በደም ብዛት እና በስኳር እየተጠቃ ስለሆነ እኛ ህዝባችንን ከእነዚህ ፀረ-ጤና ኃይሎች ለመታደግ አስችሎናል። ጋዜጠኛ- በሚቀጥለው ምርጫ ስልጣን እለቃለሁ ብለዋል እየተባለ ይወራል? መለስ - ማነው ያለው? እኔ? ጋዜጠኛ - አዎ እርስዎ። መለስ- እኔ መለስ? ... እኔ የያዘብ ባል? እንዲህ ያለ ቅብጠት አይወጣኝም። እንደአለመታደል ሆኖ ጠንካራ ተቃዋሚ ስለሌለኝ ዋናውን ጉዳይ ትተው በየመንደሩ ስሜን ያጠፋሉ። ጋዜጠኛ- በአንድ ወቅት እኮ እርሶ ሲናገሩ እኛም የውጪ ጋዜጠኞች ሰምተናል። መለስ- ምን ትቀባጥራለህ ከመቼ ወዲህ ነው ትግረኛና አማርኛ የሚችል ጋዜጠኛ B.B.C የቀጠረው? ሰማህ ... እንኳን ከሞቀ ስልጣን፣ ከሞቀ በርጫ ላይ መነሳት እንኳ ምን ያህል እንደሚከብድ እንደኔ አንድ ዙርባ በሰጩ ቅመህ እየው።

xxvii በምርጫ 97 ስም ለጥበቃ የወጣ ፖሊስ አንድ ከፍተኛ ድምፅ ወደሚሰማበት ሆቴል አጠገብ ሲደርስ በሁኔታው ይደነግጣል። ወዲያው መሳሪያውን አቀባብሎ ወደ ሆቴሉ የውስጥ ክፍል ዘለቀና «ፀጥታ የማን ናችሁ?» አለ ። ተመልካቹ ሁሉ በአንድ ላይ «የእርሴናል» በማለት ጮኹ። የፌዴራል ፖሊሱም ከመቅጽበት የመገናኛ ሬዲዮኑን አውጥቶ «ሃሎ ሃሎ ሐጎስ፤ ቅንጅት በእንግሊዘኛ ምን ነበር?» ብሎ ጠየቀ።

xxviii ገነት አሏት እንጂ መቼ ገነተ ናት ምነው ቢሏት ኖሮ ገሃነመ አላት።

xxix መቼ ይልቃልና የወያኔ ጣጣ መርሐ ግብር ሲያልቅ ውጤት ተኮር መጣ።

xxx አንድ በተማሪዎች እንቅስቃሴ ሁነኛ ተሳትፎ የለበረው ተማሪ ይያዝና ውስጥ እግሩን ገልብጠው ክፉኛ ይገርፉታል። በሌባ ጎማ- ወሬ ላላ ማለት ነው በተለመደ ስሙ። ተማሪው ለምን እንደሚገረፍ ለማወቅ ተቸግሮ ጥያቄ ያነሳል።

ተማሪ - አሥር አለቃ ለምን እንደምትገርፉኝ እኮ አላወቅሁም። ጥፋቴ ምንድን ነው?
አሥር አለቃ- የበሰበሰ መንግስት ነው ብለሃል።
ተማሪ- ግን እኮ ይሄኛው ወይም ያኛው ብዬ ስም አልጠቀስኩም።
አሥር አለቃ - አሄሄ እኔም አንተም እናውቀዋለን ያለው አንድ የበሰበሰ መንግስት ነው። ይልቅ እመን ብሎ መገረፉ ቀጠለ

xxxi **መንዙማ**
መሬት ሲንቀጠቀጥ ዛፉ ተገርስሶ
ቅርንጫፉ ሁሉ ይቀራል በስብሶ
ለዚህ የቆመ ወገን እውነተኛ ዜጋ
በዚህ ጀብዱ ሥራ ሕዝብ ያደነቃቸው

ይመስገን በታሪክ እነሆ ስማቸው።
 በአላማው የጸና የማያወላውል
 የቅንጅት መሪ ጀግና ኃይሉ ሻውል።
 ለሃገር ለወገን እድገት ብልጽግና
 ቆርጦ የተነሳ በንጹህ ልቦና
 የኅብረቱ መሪ መራራ ጉዲና።
 በቆራጥ ትግል ያርበደበራቸው
 ጠንካራ ተሟጋች ኢንጅነር ግዛቸው።
 በመሳሪያ ከበው ብዙ ቀን ቢያግቱት
 ሊበገር ያልቻለ በረሃብ በጥማቱ
 ሊበገር ያልቻለ በእስር በእንግልቱ
 ሞትን የማይፈራ በወጣትነቱ
 የወያኔ ካድሬ እንዴት ነህ ልደቱ።
 ድሮም ላሊበላ ድሮም ከባላገር
 ላይገኝ ቁም ነገር ልደት ብሎ ነገር።
 በምዕራቡ ዓለም ወፍራም ገቢ ትቶ
 ለአዝዙ የሚሟገት ወደ ሃገር ገብቶ
 ወገን ወዳድ ዜጋ በሙያው የበቃ
 ያ ዶክተር ያዕቆብ የህዝብ ጠበቃ።
 በአዝዙ ጫንቃ ላይ ሲያንዣብብ አደጋ
 ለደሐው የቆመ ሀብታም ባለ ፀጋ
 ታግሎ የሚታገል እውነተኛ ዜጋ
 ማን አለ ታላቅ ሰው ከብርሃኑ ነጋ።
 አንደበተ ርቱዕ ነው መብረቅ ነው ቃላቱ
 ኮራን ተደሰትን በደበበ እሸቱ።
 ታስራ ተንገላታ ለነፍሷ ሳትሳሳ
 ተገኝቶ ዘንድሮ ከሴት አንድ አንበሳ
 ጠንካራዋ ታጋይ ብርቱካን ሚደቅሳ።... ሀይ
 ሌሎችም በትግል የተፈተናችሁ
 በታሪክ በትውልድ ይከበር ስማችሁ
 በጅምላው ጭፍጨፋ የተገደላችሁ
 በጭንቅ ለምትኖሩ በጽኑ ቁስላችሁ
 ለመስዋዕትነት የተሰለፋችሁ
 ታግላችሁ አብሩልን የነፃነት ፋና
 ሕዝባችሁ በጉጉት ይጠብቃልና።

xxxii ልደቱ ባንዳ
 የልደቱ ይቅረብ ሞቱ
 በቴዲ ፋንታ ... ልደቱ ይታሰር
 በቴዲ ፋንታ ... ወያኔ ይግባ
 በቴዲ ፋንታ ... መለስ ይከሰስ

xxxiii አንድ በጣም ጥሩ ጥሩ የልማት ሥራዎችን የሰራና የተወደደ የኢህአዴግ አባል ነው። የምርጫ ቅስቀሳ ያካሂዳል። ምረጡኝ እያለ ሲቀሰቅስ አንድ አዛውንት ተነሱና «መምረጡንስ እንመርጥሃለን ምክንያቱም አንተ መልካም አስተዳዳሪ ነህ ነገር ግን ኢህዲግን ላንመርጥ ስለተማማልን ምልክትህን ጣት ብታደርገው ምን ይመስልሃል?» አሉት ይባላል።

xxxiv ቅንጅት አስር
 ተው በለው ተው በለው (x2)

የኢትዮጵያ ልጅ ጀግና ነው በለው!

ምርጫ አለ እያልክ እንዳታታለው!

xxxv ጋዜጠኛ - በየአጋጣሚው በሚዲያ የምንሰማው አደገኛ ጠዘኞች ባንክ ሊዘርፉ ሲሉ ተገደሉ የሚል ነው። እኛ እንዳየነው ግን በዚያ አንባቢ ምንም ባንክ የለም። ይህ አይጋጭም ወይ? ባለስልጣን - አይጋጭም! ምክንያቱም የእኛ መርህ አንድ አደጋ ከመከሰቱ በፊት አስቀድሞ የጥንቃቄ እርምጃ መውሰድ ነው። በዚህ መሰረት እነዚያ ጠዘኞች የተገበሉበት ቦታ ለባንክ የተመራ መሆኑን ስለምናውቅ አስቀድመን እርምጃ ወስደናል።

xxxvi አንድ ባለሥልጣን ገጠር ሲጎበኙ ለተሰበሰበው ህዝብ ንግግር ያደርጋሉ። የለውጡን አላማ ገልጸው ሲያበቁ የሕዝቡን ለውጥ አፍቃሪነት ያደንቃሉ። በመጨረሻም ጥያቄ ካለ ለመመለስ ዝግጁ እንደሆኑ ይገልጻሉ። ከተሰበሰቡት ሰዎች መካከል አንዱ ተነስቶ ባለስልጣኑ ለውጥ ለውጥ የሚሉት የለበጣ እንደሆነ፣ አምባገነኖች ማስመሰልና ዲሞክራሲያዊ ቃላትን እንደበቀቀን መትፋት ዋና አመላቸው እንደሆነ፣ በኢትዮጵያ ዲሞክራሲን ማስፈን ገና ብዙ ትግል እንደሚፈልግ፣ ባለስልጣኑን ጨምሮ ብዙ አስመሳይ መሪዎች ከስልጣን መወገድ እንዳለባቸው፣ የሕዝብን ሰላም ሊያስከብር የሚችል በሕዝብ የተመረጠ መንግሥት እንደሆነ በርቱዕ አንደበት በጣፈጠ አማርኛ አስረዳና ተቀመጠ። ጭብጨባው አላቋርጥ አለ። ባለስልጣኑ ፊታቸው ጥቀርሻ መሰለ። ያልጠበቁት ነገር ስለሆነም ለጥቂት ጊዜ ግራ ተጋብተው ቆዩ። በመጨረሻም ወደ ወጣቱ ዘወር አሉና- ጥሩ ትናገራለህ። ግን ዕድሜህ አጭር ነው ብለው ወደሚረፈደቸው ሄዱ።

xxxvii ምነው ፌዴራል ... ምነው ደህንነት
ዛሬ ቀን እንኳ ብንጮህበት
ለዛሬ እንኳን ብንተነፍስበት።

xxxviii በ40 ብራችን ... አገኘናቸው!
በ40 ብራችን ነፃነታችን!
በ40 ብራችን ... ዲሞክራሲ!
40 ብራችን ...

xxxix እናትን አረብ አገር ያለች ልጃቸው ሃያአንድ ኢንች ቴሌቪዥን ግዥ ብላ ገንዘብ ትልክላቸዋለች። ልጅቷ ወደ ሃገር ቤት ስትመለስ እቤት አስራአንድ ኢንች ቴሌቪዥን ታገኛለች። ልጅ - ምነው እማዬ ሃያአንድ ኢንች ቴሌቪዥን አይደል እንዴ ግዢ ያልኩሽ? እናት- አዬ ልጄ መጀመሪያ የገዛሁትማ ሃያአንድ ኢንች ቴሌቪዥን ነበር። ነገር ግን እነርሱ (ኢቲቪ) በቴሌቪዥን ውስጥ ሆነው ሲዋሹ እሱ ሲሳቀቅ፣ እነርሱ ሲዋሹ እሱ ሲሳቀቅ፣ እነርሱ ሲዋሹ እሱ ሲሳቀቅ ይኸው አነሰ። እንዲያውም በጊዜ ደርሰሽበታል እንጂ ይጠፋ ነበር።

xl ኢቲቪ ... እንደለመድከው
የሯጩን ቁጥር እንዳትቀንሰው
ኢቲቪ ኢቲቪ ሆይ
ጠግበው ሮጡ ልትል ነወይ?

xli ባንፈራ ኑሮ የሀይሌን አደራ
እንሰብረው ነበር ይህን ካሜራ።

APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Interview Guiding Questions

The purpose of this interview questions are guiding the collection of political messages transmitted through the alternative media about local political issues in Addis Ababa since 2005 – 2010.

BIO

1. Sex
2. Age
2. Occupation
3. Educational status

DETAILED QUESTIONS

1. Tell me any political jokes, oral poems, music, mobile phone multimedia or text messages you ever heard or pass on. What is the core issue in the stories?
2. What are the dominant nature and tone of the messages?
3. From whom do you receive these political messages?
4. For whom you usually send such kind of messages? (Friends, colleagues, relatives, families, etc)
5. Which channels or/and technologies you usually used to receive or send political messages?
6. In which forms (genres) you ever exchange political messages?
7. In which context you communicate the political messages?
8. Do you have anything to say about alternative media and its employments in political communication?

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix 2- Observation Checklist

The purpose of this observation checklist is guiding data collection. The political messages transmitted through the alternative media about politics and their communication process collected through participant observation using this guide.

BIO

1. Sex
2. Age (approximate)
2. Occupation or area
3. Educational status

OTHER INFORMATIONS

1. What is the message?
2. Its content?
3. What is the context the communication takes place?
4. What are the networks and the channels?
5. Who is the sender of the message?
6. Who is the receiver of the message?
7. How is the message transmitted?
8. Any other observed fact about the communication

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix 3- List of Informants

No	Educational Status	Age	Sex	Occupation
1	High school graduate	Above 35	Male	Civil servant
2	High school graduate	Between 18- 35	Male	unemployed
3	College student	Below 18	Male	student
4	College student	Between 18- 35	Male	Student
5	Diploma or first degree holder	Above 35	Male	Private worker
6	Diploma or first degree holder	Between 18- 35	Male	Civil servant
7	Diploma or first degree holder	Between 18- 35	Male	Civil servant
8	Diploma or first degree holder	Between 18- 35	Male	Civil servant
9	Diploma or first degree holder	Between 18- 35	Male	Private worker
10	Diploma or first degree holder	Between 18- 35	Male	NGO employee
11	Above first degree	Above 35	Male	Private worker
12	Above first degree	Above 35	Male	NGO employee
13	High school graduate	Between 18- 35	Female	unemployed
14	High school graduate	Between 18- 35	Female	Private worker
15	College student	Below 18	Female	Student
16	Diploma or first degree holder	Between 18- 35	Female	Civil servant
17	Diploma or first degree holder	Between 18- 35	Female	Civil servant
18	Above first degree	Between 18- 35	Female	Civil servant
19	Above first degree	Between 18- 35	Female	Civil servant
20	Above first degree	Between 18- 35	Female	Civil servant
21	Above first degree	Above 35	Female	Private worker

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date of Submission _____