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**MEDIA AS A PUBLIC FORUM: THE CASE OF AMHARA MASS MEDIA
AGENCY'S 'YEKETEMOCH MEDEREK' PROGRAM**

Zelalem Alemenew Desta

**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School of Journalism and
Communication**

**Addis Ababa University
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
June 2017**

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master
of Arts in Journalism and Communication

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Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Zelalem Alemenew Desta, entitled Media as a Public Forum: The Case of Amhara Mass Media Agency's *'Yeketemoch Mederek'* Program and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the Examining Committee:

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Chair of Department or Graduate Program Coordinator

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I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my late father.

(You are alive as long as I am)

Abstract

Media as a Public Forum: The Case of Amhara Mass Media Agency's 'Yeketemoch Mederek' Program

Zelalem Alemenew

Addis Ababa University, 2017

This research attempted to examine how Yeketemoch Mederek program of AMMA is serving as a public forum primarily focusing on how the program is contributing to the promotion of good governance and democracy in Amhara Regional State. Yeketemoch Mederek is a radio and TV program produced based on the forum held between city administrators and the society. The forum is organized and chaired by journalists of the media. Thus, the researcher employed qualitative research method. In-depth interview was conducted with 14 purposively selected key informants while records of forums held in two randomly selected towns were reviewed.

In the forum, issues related to lack of good governance and problems of infrastructure development were most commonly raised. The study revealed that the program is contributing its part to the promotion of good governance and democracy by adopting the principle of naming and shaming and serving as a bridge between the governors and the society. It also demonstrates these roles by alarming local leaders to be accountable added to creating a platform for the exercise of democracy and creation of awareness.

As the findings indicate, the regional government supports the program with an enthusiasm that it could contribute to the promotion of democracy and good governance in the region. The finding also revealed that even though many positive changes were attained as a result of the forum, there are still towns of the region where no significant change was observed.

The strength of the program lies in its effort of conducting mini research ahead of the discussion, making follow up stories and being able to manage the discussions properly. On the other hand, an assessment of the weaknesses of the program showed that the program focusing on comments and criticisms against the administrators by giving little emphasis on what is expected from the society. It also fails to give analysis, interpretations, and comments to the problems raised in the forums. Moreover, having no fixed time of transmission on both TV and radio is also the other weakness.

The study finally suggested the program to have a fixed time of transmission. Producers of the program shall also invite experts to give analysis, interpretations, and comments to the problems raised in the forums. Media policy makers shall design a policy that compels other media organizations of Ethiopia to incorporate organizing forums as part of their principal duties.

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List of Acronyms

AMMA Amhara Mass Media Agency

CPJ Committee to Protect Journalists

MoPSHRD Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development

PSIR Political Science and International Relations

VOA Voice of America

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the topic of the study. Hence, it establishes background, states problem statement, and presents objectives of the study. It also deals with, significance, scope, and limitation of the study.

1.1. Background of the study

A mass medium (such as television) is generally classified as ‘one-to-many’ communication - ‘one’ person (such as the author of a book, the creators of a television program or a film director), communicates many people (the audience) at the same time in a way that is largely impersonal; that is, the communication is one-way (Dutton et al, 1998). Mass media are the means that are used to communicate the public.

Media and democracy are interdependent. The communication theorist Alfaro (2006) asserted that today the media constitute a crucial source of civic education and legitimization of democratic power. Political elites legitimize themselves or join dissident discourses through their interactions with newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. Notions of political authority, political values and general understanding of a nation’s political institutions are consolidated through the daily programs of the mass media and particularly via news.

Media organizations have many responsibilities such as facilitating a forum for discussion. Dahlgren (2000) noted the contributions of media to democracy and development. According to Dahlgren, media provide an inclusive, pluralistic public sphere for imparting relevant knowledge and competencies to citizens about their own role in the processes of good governance and sustainable development: Free, independent and pluralistic media afford citizens the opportunity to participate in public life. He further added people must have access to reliable reports, portrayals, analyses, discussions, debates and so forth about current affairs. Here the media’s role is central.

Public forums are organized with the aim of discussing current issues with the society. The role of media in providing this platform for debate and discussion is, therefore, vital in promoting good governance and narrowing the communication gap between the society and authorities.

Media provide a mechanism for regular citizens to be heard and to therefore influence political agendas and freely express their opinion and criticism.

Established in 1993, the Amhara Mass Media Agency (AMMA) is among the regional stakeholders to the regional government's new national building program. Since its establishment, the media institute has been engaged in providing information in different media outlets such as regional radio station, FM, TV, and newspaper.

Currently, the agency has FM stations in Dessie and Debere Berehan. Moreover, the construction of FM transmission stations is going on in North Gondar and East Gojam to solve coverage problems. Nowadays, the Agency has over 500 employees.

Amhara Mass Media Agency was established with the aim of producing programs that cover, among others, promotion of development, sustainable peace, and democratization. "*Yeketemoch Medrek*" (Amharic phrase literally can be translated as "Cities' Forum" is a radio and TV program started to be aired seven years ago with the aim of discharging its responsibility of facilitating a forum for discussion.

This paper attempted to examine how Yeketemoch Mederek program of AMMA is serving as a public forum primarily focusing on how the program is contributing to the promotion of good governance and democracy in Amhara Regional State.

1.2. Problem Statement

Media plays a crucial role in bringing about democracy and ensuring good governance. As an important source of information, media has been functioning the role of the heart of democratic society and good governance. According to Norris (2006), the media have three key roles in contributing to democratization and good governance. Among the most vital functions of media is to act as a watchdog over the powerful, promoting accountability, transparency and public scrutiny. The second important role of media is to function as a civic forum for political debate, facilitating informed electoral choices and actions; and the third function is to act as an agenda-setter for policy makers, strengthening government responsiveness for instance to social problems and to exclusion.

A nation is said to be democratic if, among others, the citizens have the right to express their opinion freely. Regarding the relationship between press freedom and democracy, Beetham and Boyle (2009) stressed that freedom of the press is essential in a democracy. They noted, “The press plays a role in the political training of citizens and democratic culture by informing them of the scope of public policies, the management and conduct of affairs by those responsible at both the State and grass-roots level, by providing and offering the members of the community as means of communicating with each other” (Beetham and Boyle, 2009). Democracy cannot be exercised without the active participation of citizens. Media organizations are supposed to provide the platform where opinions of the ordinary citizens could be heard.

As a civic forum, we assume that the news media should function at the most general level as a conduit providing government and the governed with opportunities to communicate effectively with each other. In this regard, the news media serves as an essential linkage connecting horizontally between political actors and vertically between these actors and the electorate. The process of communications is important at any stage of the political cycle but particularly during election campaigns, when citizens have the greatest opportunities to influence the political process and choose the government. (Dahlgren and Sparks, 1995).

In Ethiopia, nevertheless, it is not common to see both private and public media organizing forum where everyone can participate in discussions regularly although there may be some telephone discussion programs. AMMA, however, is trying to fill this gap. Of all the programs being produced by the media organization ‘*Ande Le’ande*’, ‘*Mestawot*’ and ‘*Yeketemoch Mederek*’ programs are aimed at helping to solve problems related to good governance in the region.

Yeketemoch Mederek seems to be popular among residents of the Amhara region. It is common to see the hall, where the forum is organized, full of attendants who actively participate and express their opinion with no fear. Getting the public trust and free will for discussion and organizing such forums would not be such an easy task especially for government owned media of Ethiopia that are often criticized for siding with the ruling party. Putting the government officials and the public together and letting them discuss different issues is something that can be appreciated. This motivated the researcher to conduct a research on the program.

The issue of whether the like programs can cause ethical and legal problems is important. To date, we don’t know whether any such related problems have arisen. Most of all we don’t know

if people in the region believe the program contributes to building a democratic order, accountable institutions, and a transparent society.

In addition, this program can be considered pretentious if the promises kept as a result of the forum are not honored. Similarly, unless the investigative journalism that has led to the exposing of scandal does not result in legal action on those officials and others involved, the program can eventually be taken as pointless and an act of political pretension.

As a result of this, examining the contribution of the Yeketemoch Mederek program to the promotion of democracy and good governance is very important. However, there is no any research conducted to assess the role of the program in the study area. Hence, the main problem of this research is the existence of knowledge gap. Therefore, this study is intended to fill the knowledge gap regarding how Yeketemoch Mederek program of AMMA is contributing to the development of good governance and democracy in the region.

1.3. Objective of the Study

The study has the following general and specific objectives.

1.3.1. General Objective

The main objective of this study was to examine how Yeketemoch Mederek program of AMMA is contributing to the promotion of good governance and democracy in Amhara Regional State.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

Based on the above general objective, the following key points were identified as the specific objectives of the study:

- To analyze ‘Yeketemoch Mederek’ program in view of journalism principles
- To assess the perception of audiences to the program in its relevance for the promotion of good governance
- To find out the perceived effectiveness of the program in achieving its goal
- To identify the opportunities and challenges in production of the program

1.4. Research Questions

Introducing the research question is intended to accomplish two basic purposes. Firstly, to provide a clear view what the research entails and, what the thesis will cover. Secondly, it outlines a clear connection with the research objectives (Juhiam, 2008).

Therefore, in order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What is the contribution of the program to the promotion of democracy and good governance?
- What is the program like in view of journalism principles?
- How do the audiences perceive the program in its relevance for the promotion of good governance?
- How much effective is the program in achieving its goal?
- What are the challenges and opportunities in the production of the program?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study has an important contribution to the field of media studies and the promotion of good governance and democracy. It contributes to media as a field of study because it shows how in Africa context media can be used as a powerful forum for a discussion of issues of importance to state building and promotion of a culture of democratic society.

Media policy makers could use this research as a reference about the merits of organizing forums and design policies which urge media organizations to incorporate organizing forums as their principal duty. It will also help AMMA and producers of the program know their contribution to the promotion of good governance and help them fill the gap that exists as they conduct forums. Moreover, the findings of this study will serve as a springboard for other researchers who would like to conduct research on the same or related topic in other media of the country.

1.6. Scope of the study

AMMA gives coverage mainly to issues related to the Amhara region. Thus, Yeketemoch Mederek forums have been held only in the towns of the region in different episodes. The first

two episodes were held in the zonal towns alone. This study has focused only on AMMA's Yeketemoch Mederek program on its act of organizing a forum for discussion in the third episode. In this episode, which started to be held in 2016, the media organized the forum in 19 towns incorporating few non-zonal towns. The researcher randomly selected two towns (Woreta and Adet) and reviewed the transmitted programs. The forum was held those two towns on April 17, 2016 and June 05, 2016 respectively.

1.7. Limitations of the study

Since the nation had declared a state of national emergency due to the uprising occurred in a different part of the country by the time the researcher was collecting data, some individuals were not willing to hold interview fearing their opinion would not be confidential and would result in a negative consequence to them. The other limitation was inaccessibility of all the transmitted programs on websites.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter sets out to explore the basic concept of media and democracy. It assesses the principles, characteristics, and types of democracy. It also provides the role and characteristics of mass media and principles of journalism. Besides these, other issues such as the relationship between media and democracy, media's role of facilitating a forum for discussion as well as theoretical frameworks are part of the chapter.

2.1. Media and Democracy

2.1.1. What is democracy

Definition

Different scholars have defined democracy since the word was coined for the first time. Thus, getting a single definition by which everyone could agree would be a difficult task. U.S. Department of State defined democracy as a form of government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all adult citizens, directly or indirectly through their freely elected representatives (Howard, 2013).

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (1998) also noted the difficulty of finding a definition saying “developing an international definition of democracy or even a consensus as to its content, other than for the intellectual challenge of the undertaking is a daunting task, instead a more realistic one would be to inquire into the values, principles, goals, and methods that emerge as a consensus among scholars, experts and public activists representing all regions and major cultures of the world”

Abraham Lincoln gave the most common definition of democracy that is ‘democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people’. This is to mean, a government comes from the people; it is exercised by the people, and for the purpose of the people's own interests.

According to Boye (1998), democracy describes a system of government which, in the opinion of the overwhelming majority of authors, meets three necessary conditions. These are (i) The real

existence of competition between individuals or groups of individuals organized into political parties to gain power and public office, at regular intervals and according to peaceful procedures which are pre-established and generally accepted. (ii) The right of citizens to participate in the choice of leaders through the holding of free, transparent and fair elections and (iii) Recognition and the juridical guarantee of the exercise of civil and political freedoms and rights which are recognized under international conventional law as an integral part of human rights: freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of the press, right to security of the person and property against any form of arbitrary infringement, etc. These three conditions constitute what might be called the "hard core" of any democratic political regime. However, even if this hardcore is necessary, it is far from sufficient to enable a political system to be described as unequivocally democratic (Boye, 1998).

2.1.1.1. Principles of democracy

Democracy is an ever-perfecting and perfectible goal, likely never to be attained, but always meritorious enough to be pursued with commitment and good faith. But to understand what is sought to be achieved is not enough, for without democratic processes, which need constant enhancement of their effectiveness and integrity, democracy as a goal can never be achieved (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1998).

Democracy cannot exist without civil society, and civil society cannot exist without a population that has the will and capacity to act in defense of its values and institutions. In the final analysis, however, it is people who make and live democracy, and who can also undo it and destroy it. Thus, people must have the knowledge and capacity to exercise their individual and collective rights in order to bring about democracy, preserve democratic processes, and ensure that these processes work effectively and with integrity so that democratic outcomes may be attained (Ibid).

The Vienna Declaration on Human Rights stated that "Democracy" is one of the "aspirations of all the peoples of an international order based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations." (The Vienna Declaration on Human Rights, supra note 23). The Charter, in its preamble and in Articles 1, 55, and 56 recognizes as a basic principle the equality of states and

peoples, the right of equal self-determination of peoples, and respect for individual collective human rights and fundamental freedoms.

2.1.1.2. Characteristics of Democracy

Democracy is more than just a set of specific government institutions; it rests upon a well-understood group of values, attitudes, and practices – all of which may take different forms and expressions among different cultures and societies around the world. Howard (2013) noted some core democratic characteristics as follows:

- Democracy is a government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all adult citizens directly or indirectly through their freely elected representatives.
- Democracy rests upon the principle of majority rule, which means that decisions are made by the majority and have to be accepted by all, but minority viewpoints are respected and protected.
- Democracies guard against all-powerful central governments and decentralize government to regional and local levels, understanding that all levels of government must be as accessible and responsive to the people as possible.
- Democracies understand that one of their prime functions is to protect such basic human rights as freedom of speech and religion; the right to equal protection under the law; and the opportunity to organize and participate fully in the political, economic, and cultural life of society.
- Democracies conduct regular free and fair elections open to all citizens of voting age. Citizens in a democracy have not only rights, but also the responsibility to participate in political systems that, in turn, protect their rights and freedoms.
- Democratic societies are committed to the values of tolerance, cooperation, and compromise (Howard, 2013).

2.1.1.3. Types of Democracy

Democracies fall into two basic categories, i.e. direct/participatory and representative democracy.

Indirect democracy, citizens, without the intermediary of elected or appointed officials, can participate in making public decisions. Direct democracy thus reduces the distinction between government and the governed and between the state and civil society; it is a system of popular self-government. Its most common manifestation in the modern era is the use of referenda. **Direct democracy** is most clearly practicable with relatively small numbers of people – in a community organization, tribal council, or the local unit of a labor union, for example – where members can meet in a single room to discuss issues and arrive at decisions by consensus or majority vote. However, today, as in the past, the most common form of democracy, whether for a town of 50,000 or a nation of 50 million people, is representative democracy, in which the citizens elect officials to make political decisions, formulate laws, and administer programs for the public good (Howard, 2013).

2.1.2. Mass Media

A medium is a ‘channel of communication’ - a means through which people send and receive information. The printed word, for example, is a medium; when we read a newspaper or magazine, something is communicated to us in some way. Similarly, electronic forms of communication - television, telephones, film and such like - are media (the plural of medium) (Livesey, 2011).

Mass media, therefore, refer to channels of communication that involve transmitting information in some way, shape to large numbers of people (Ibid). This definition, however, lacks to specify the exact minimum number to be called as a “large number” which would qualify as a “mass”.

A mass medium (such as television) is generally classified as ‘one-to-many’ communication - ‘one’ person (such as the author of a book, the creators of a television program or a film director), communicates to many people (the audience) “at the same time” in a way that is largely impersonal; that is, the communication is one-way, in the sense that those communicating a message to an audience don’t receive simultaneous feedback from that audience (Livesey, 2011).

2.1.2.1. Characteristics of Mass Media

Dutton et al (1998) suggest that traditionally the mass media has been differentiated from other types of communication, such as interpersonal communication that occurs on a one-to-one basis, in terms of four essential characteristics:

1. **Distance:** Communication between those who send and receive messages (media-speak for information) is: impersonal, lacks immediacy and is one way (from the producer/creator of the information to the consumer/audience). When I watch a film, for example, no matter how emotionally involved I become in the action, I cannot directly affect what's unfolding on the screen.
2. **Technology:** Mass communication requires a vehicle, such as a television receiver, a method of printing and so forth that allows messages to be sent and received.
3. **Scale:** One feature of a mass medium, as we have noted, is it involves simultaneous communication with many people.
4. **Commodity:** An interesting feature of mass communication is that it comes at a price. I can watch football on TV, for example, if I can afford a television, a license fee (to watch BBC or ITV) or a subscription to something like Sky Sports if it's on satellite or cable.

Crosbie (2002) on the other hand argues that mass media have characteristics that, when combined, make them very different to other forms of mass media. These include:- Technology: They cannot exist without the appropriate (computer) technology. Personalization: Individualized messages (either tailored to the particular needs of those receiving them or having the appearance of being so constructed) can be simultaneously delivered to vast numbers of people. Collective control: Each person in a network has, potentially, the ability to share, shape and change the content of the information being exchanged (Crosbie, 2002).

The above two kinds of mass media characteristics have one point in common that is technology.

2.1.3. The Relationship between Media and Democracy

In 1998 Ramaphosa noted that “the mass media is one such mechanism, or at least should be, for deepening democracy”. As to him, “for media to play a constructive role, it needs to be free from any legal or political constraints. It should be protected by freedoms of speech, association, and publication. It needs to be protected from censorship or banning. It needs, in short, to be free to say what it likes. It needs to be independent from government control, and needs the institutional

capacity to represent a broad diversity of perspectives and views. Achieving the latter is easier said than done. To an increasing extent in many countries of the world, the mass media is being owned and controlled by fewer and fewer people (Ramaphosa, 1998).

Governmental regulations could possibly harm press freedoms. In this regard, Miklos claimed that undue legal restrictions passed by freely elected governments can be almost as oppressive for the press as the dictatorial arbitrariness of the past. This is especially the case when legal restrictions are created (or misused) with the clear intention of eliminating independent reporting and opinion. Such malicious media laws might, for example:

- Discriminate against non-state media outlets, in favor of the still-existing state-owned press, for example in the administration of such spheres as registration, taxation, printing, subscription, and distribution;
- Unfairly control the issue of broadcast licenses;
- Criminalize dissenting views or unwelcome investigative stories;
- Use a selective approach in the application of criminal or civil provisions protecting personal rights (Haraszti, 2008).

Freedom of the press is essential in a democracy. The press plays a role in the political training of citizens and democratic culture by informing them of the scope of public policies, the management and conduct of affairs by those responsible at both the State and grass-roots level, by providing and offering the members of the community the means of communicating with each other (Beetham, C. Boyle, 2009: 148). Quality and self-regulation must not be treated by governments as preconditions to granting full freedom; on the contrary, ethical journalism can only develop in an atmosphere of guaranteed freedom. Journalists' self-restraint must be preceded and accompanied by governmental self-restraint in the handling of media (Haraszti, 2008).

“The importance of the press in a country is not dependent on the number of newspapers or private radio and television stations but on the quality of the information provided to the public”. (Boye, 1998).

The media, along with other, the civil society, political parties and, especially, a strong opposition in parliament, is among the democratic institutions and actors.

A free and independent media is important in a democracy as it is the mouthpiece for reaching out to the masses. As modern societies grow in size and complexity, the media have dominated the arena for communication and public debate. The media includes radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books and, more recently, the internet and satellite television. The functions of the media are: (Howard, 2013)

- Information and education: The media has a central role to play in informing and educating the citizens and in providing accurate information to public consumers. It facilitates intelligent decisions about public policy by hosting debates and dialogues. This role is especially important during election campaigns when few voters will have the opportunity to see, much less talk, with candidates in person.
- Advocacy: Media audiences may benefit from various conflicting opinions, in order to obtain a wide range of viewpoints.
- Acting as a watchdog over government and other powerful institutions in society: By holding to a standard of independence and objectivity, however imperfectly, news media can expose the truth behind the claims of governments and hold public officials accountable for their actions.
- Setting the agenda: Because the media cannot report on everything, they must choose issues to highlight and which to ignore. This way the media decides what is news and what is not. These decisions, in turn, influence the public's perception of what issues are most important.

Chakchouk also suggested the role media plays as “the roles of media and civil society representatives remain important in providing a platform for citizen voices, and their efforts are necessary to encourage individuals to engage in public debates. They also have a key watchdog role in monitoring and reporting on governance issues, and working to preserve the freedoms for citizens through capacity building training and advocacy campaigns” (Chakchouk, 2015)

The journalists of both legacy and new media have to stand up and ensure respect for a code of ethics and to remain principled in collecting and disseminating information to the public, doing so without any external pressure or corrupt influences or allowing themselves to be used as tools of propaganda or for the propagation of rumor. Patterns must change to limit the influence of the government or of individuals over media content. Democracy is measured by the number of

media which are free, pluralistic and independent, and the role of society at large is to promote the safety of the journalists and to provide them with the tools to protect their integrity (Ibid).

Media and politics are interdependent. The communication theorist Rosa Maria Alfaro asserted that today the media constitute a crucial source of civic education and legitimization of democratic power. Political elites legitimize themselves or join dissident discourses through their interactions with newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. Notions of political authority, political values and general understanding of a nation's political institutions are consolidated through the daily programs of the mass media and particularly via news. The national and international agenda emerge from daily mass media processes of production and consumption. Both the concept and feeling of the nation and of the world are also articulated in the production and consumption of media (Alfaro, 2006).

Overall, using a framework of a free, independent and pluralistic media, we can paraphrase Peter Dahlgren (2000), who refers to the 'empirical dimensions' of civic culture, to highlight in more detail four of the defining features of the contribution by such media to both democracy and development. These are:

- **Providing an inclusive, pluralistic public sphere for imparting relevant knowledge and competencies to citizens about their own role in the processes of good governance and sustainable development:** Free, independent and pluralistic media afford citizens the opportunity to participate in public life. People must have access to reliable reports, portrayals, analyses, discussions, debates and so forth about current affairs. Here the media's role is central. The sources of knowledge and the materials for the development of competencies must be understandable, communicated in ways that connect with different groups of people, enabling them to fully participate in public decisions that flow from the necessary social, political and economic contestations in their societies.
- **Inculcating loyalty to democratic values and procedures and thus cultivating civic virtue (participation, solidarity, tolerance, courage, etc.):** Democracy will not function if such virtues as tolerance and willingness to follow democratic principles and procedures do not have a grounding in everyday life. Even support for the legal system (assuming it is legitimate) is an expression of such civic virtue. Just what are the best or real democratic values, and how they are applied, can be the grounds for serious dispute. The media can

reinforce the commitment to democratic values by giving sustained attention to them. As such, they can potentially help to cultivate a culture of respect for the rule of law in which just laws are upheld by all.

- **Personifying the practices, routines, traditions associated with democratic citizenship and sustainable developmental paths:** Democracy and development must be embodied in concrete, recurring practices – individual, group, and collective – relevant for diverse situations. Such practices help generate personal and social meaning to the ideals of democracy and development, and they must have an element of the routine about them, if they are to be a part of a civic culture. The interaction among citizens is a cornerstone of the public sphere, and the kinds of established rules and etiquette that shape such interaction either promote the practices of public discussion or contribute to their evaporation. Across time, practices become traditions, and experience becomes a collective memory; today's democracy and development both need to be able to refer to the past, without being locked in it.
- **Fostering the construction of the kinds of plural identities associated with democratic citizenship:** How we define citizenship is inseparable from how we define democracy and the good society. One can say that the formal status of citizenship conceptually frames much of political life in modern democracies. The media can do much to strengthen public perceptions of what it means to be a citizen in a democracy in the context of a pluralistic and uneven global dispensation. The media can reinforce notions of participation, accountability, solidarity, tolerance, courage, etc. which define democratic citizenship, and at the same time counter extremism, xenophobia and gender discrimination.

What Dahlgren pointed above about the contribution of media to both democracy and development can be summarized as the provision of platform for discussions, cultivation of civic virtue, paving the way for citizenship and sustainable developmental paths and advocating democratic citizenship.

2.2. The Role of Media

Brain McNair (2011) stated five functions of the media in societies that he called an ideal type democratic society. These are; (1) informing citizens of what is happening around them

(‘surveillance’ or ‘monitoring’ functions), (2) educating citizens as to the meaning and significance of the ‘facts’, (3) providing a platform for public political discourse and facilitating ‘public opinion’ formation, (4) giving publicity to governmental and political institutions, and (5) serving as a channel for the advocacy of political viewpoints (McNair, 2011).

On the other hand, Christians et al, (2009) suggested that Media’s democratic functions could be summarized under four broad roles; monitorial, facilitative, radical and collaborative.

From the above four roles of media, the facilitative role of media fits with our topic. Curran, (2002) in his book *Media and Power* documents that the watchdog role of the media is protective in that they divulge any wrong deeds that may have a detrimental effect on democracy. However, he writes, the media could also be an agency of information and debate which facilitates a better functioning of democracy. ‘The media provide a forum for debate in which people can identify problems, propose solutions, reach an agreement and guide the public direction of society’ (Curran, 2002).

Since democracy assumes an active public concerned about political issues and discussions in order to best influence decision-making, it is normative that the media should serve the role of facilitating the public debate.

In the same vein, Merritt and McCombs contend that for self-government and a discussion on problems with solutions, democratic society needs information that is relevant and that could be shared among the citizenry, and a forum to be relied upon for the discussion of the implications of the information. They assert that these functions—information and forum—could only be provided by journalists (Merritt and McCombs, 2004).

Focusing on how this role should be carried out in accordance with the fundamental principles of journalism, Kovach & Rosenstiel wrote “Yet in a new age, it is more important, not less, that this public discussion be built on the same principle as the rest of journalism, starting with truthfulness, facts, and verification. A debate steeped in prejudice and supposition only inflames”. (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007).

2.2.1. Principles of Journalism

Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel published a book in 2007 entitled “The Elements of Journalism”. In it, there are nine principles of journalism. The book was written largely based on

the research and teachings of the Committee of Concerned Journalists — a consortium of reporters, editors, producers, publishers, owners, and academics that for 10 years facilitated a discussion among thousands of journalists about what they did, how they did it, and why it was important.

Below are stated the nine principles of journalism: (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007)

A. Journalism's first obligation is, to tell the truth

It is actually more helpful, and more realistic, to understand journalistic truth as a process- or continuing journey toward understanding- which begins with the first-day stories and builds over time. The truth here, in other words, is a complicated and sometimes contradictory phenomenon, but seen as a process over time, journalism can get at it. It attempts to get at the truth in a confused world by stripping information first of any attached misinformation, disinformation, or self-promoting information and then letting the community react, and the sorting out process ensues. The search for truth becomes a conversation. Rather than rushing to add context and interpretation, the press needs to concentrate on synthesis and verification (Ibid).

B. Journalism's first loyalty is to citizens

Rather than selling customers content, news people are building a relationship with their audience based on their values, on their judgment, authority, courage, professionalism, and commitment to the community. Providing this creates a bond with the public, which the news organization then rents to advertisers (Ibid).

C. The essence of journalism is a discipline of verification.

A more conscious discipline of verification is the best antidote to the old journalism of verification being overrun by a new journalism of assertion, and it would provide citizens with a basis for relying on journalistic accounts. We began to see a core set of concepts that form the foundation of the discipline of verification. 1) Never add anything that was not there. 2) Never deceive the audience. 3) Be transparent about your methods and motives. 4) Rely on your own original reporting and 5) Exercise humility (Ibid).

D. Journalists must maintain an independence from those they cover

Being impartial or neutral is not a core principle of journalism. Impartiality was never what was meant by objectivity. The critical step in pursuing truthfulness and informing citizens is not

neutrality but independence. This applies even to those who work in the realm of opinion, criticism, and commentary. It is this independence of spirit and mind, rather than neutrality, which journalists must keep in focus. Their credibility is rooted instead in the same dedication to accuracy, verification, the larger public interest, and a desire to inform that all other journalists subscribe to (Ibid).

In the end, it is good judgment, and an abiding commitment to the principle of the first allegiance to citizens, that separates the journalist from the partisan. Having an opinion is not only allowable, not only natural, but it is valuable to the natural skepticism with which any good reporter approaches a story. But a journalist must be smart enough and honest enough to recognize that opinion must be based on something more substantial than personal beliefs if it is to be of journalistic use (Ibid)

E. Journalists must serve as an independent monitor of power

The watchdog principle means more than simply monitoring government, but extends to all the powerful institutions in society. As firmly as journalists believe in it, the watchdog principle is often misunderstood. The concept is deeper and more nuanced than the literal sense of afflicting or comforting would suggest. As history showed us, it more properly means watching over the powerful few in society on behalf of the many to guard against tyranny. (Ibid).

F. Journalists must make the significant interesting and relevant

Storytelling and information are not contradictory. They are better understood as two points on a continuum of communicating. Most journalism, like most communication, exists in the middle. The journalists' task is to find the way to make the significant interesting for each story and finding the right mix of the serious and the less serious that offers an account of the day. Perhaps it is best understood this way: Journalism is storytelling with a purpose. That purpose is to provide people with information they need to understand the world. The first challenge is finding the information that people need to live their lives. The second is to make it meaningful, relevant, and engaging (Ibid).

G. Journalists should keep the news in proportion and make it comprehensive

Journalism is our modern cartography. It creates a map for citizens to navigate society. This is its utility and its economic reason for being. As with any map, journalism's value depends on its

completeness and proportionality. Journalists who devote far more time and space to a sensational trial or celebrity scandal than they know it deserves- because they think it will sell are like cartographers who drew England and Spain the size of Greenland because it was popular. It may make short-term economic sense but it misleads the traveler and eventually destroys the credibility of the mapmaker. The journalist who writes what "she just! mows to be true," without really checking first, is the artist who draws sea monsters in the distant corners of the New World (Ibid).

H. Journalists have an obligation to personal conscience

Every journalist- from the newsroom to the boardroom- must have a personal sense of ethics and responsibility-a moral compass. What's more, they have a responsibility to voice their personal conscience out loud and allow others around them to do so as well. (Ibid).

I. Journalism must provide a forum for public criticism and comment

This forum function of the press would make it possible to create a democracy even in a large, diverse country by encouraging what James Madison and others considered the basis upon which democracy would stand compromise, compromise, compromise...

In the new age of media, it is more incumbent on those providing us with journalism that they decipher the spin and lies of commercialized argument, lobbying, and political propaganda it is more important, not less, that this public discussion be built on the same principles as the rest of journalism starting with truthfulness, facts, and verification. For a forum without regard for facts fails to inform. A debate steeped in prejudice and supposition only inflames.

Just as important, this forum must be for all parts of the community, not just the affluent or demographically attractive.

The problem with the argument culture-the diminished the level of reporting, the devaluing of experts, the emphasis on a narrow range of blockbuster stories, and the emphasis on an oversimplified, polarized debate is that it tends to disenfranchise people from the discussion that the media not only are supposed to support but need for their own survival. Making politics into a shouting match drives people away from the media.

The press has a stake in that discussion being inclusive and nuanced, and an accurate reflection of where the debate in society actually exists, as well as where the points of agreement are (Ibid)

2.2.2. Media's role in facilitating forum for discussion

The News Media as Civic Forum

We can identify three political functions for the news media system in election campaigns, -- as a civic forum for pluralistic debate, as a watchdog for civil and political liberties, and as a mobilizing agent for public participation (Norri and Pippa, 2000).

The concept of the news media as a civic forum is most closely associated with the work of Jurgen Habermas, who has been widely influential. Habermas's ideal notion of a public sphere is predicated on the notion of widespread discussion about public affairs in civic society (Habermas, 1998).

The idea of a public sphere is a meeting place or debating forum, facilitating informed deliberation about the major issues of the day and mediating between citizens and the state.

In the 18th century, a diverse range of intellectual journals and public affairs periodicals among fashionable society were regarded as providing the ideal media in this process, along with the radical press, and meeting places in the political salons and coffee houses of London, Paris, and Vienna. In the late 19th century, changes in the nature of liberal democracy, particularly the expansion of the franchise beyond the bourgeois elites, the growth of the popular press, and the increasing specialization and complexity of government, transformed the conditions facilitating the traditional channels of elite political discussion and enlarged the public sphere (Norri and Pippa, 2000).

Habermas deplored the effects of developments in the news media, including the growing role of the mass-circulation popular press, the concentration of corporate ownership in large media groups, and the rising power of advertisers, a process which, he argued, led to a homogenization of political information and the shift from 'real' to 'virtual' political debate (Ibid).

Despite these developments, today the idea of the press as a civic forum for pluralistic debate, mediating between citizens and the state, remains highly influential. (Dahlgren and Sparks, 1995). Traditional meeting places have altered, but not beyond recognition, as venues such as newspaper ‘op - ed’ features, editorial columns and letter pages, and public affairs magazines, along with newer outlets like talk radio programs, CNN’s ‘Larry King Live’, BBC2’s News Night or Meet the Press, and internet discussion forums, all provide regular opportunities for political debate for a network of politicians, government officials, journalistic commentators, advocacy group spokespersons, think -tank analysts, and academic policy experts, as well as providing opportunities for public input through phone-in or studio discussions. (Ibid)

As a civic forum, we assume that the news media should function at the most general level as a conduit providing government and the governed with opportunities to communicate effectively with each other. In this regard, the news media serves as an essential linkage connecting horizontally between political actors and vertically between these actors and the electorate. The process of communications is important at any stage of the political cycle but particularly during election campaigns, when citizens have the greatest opportunities to influence the political process and choose the government (Ibid).

Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights noted “while the candidate and party campaigns are of course a form of debate, there are also other voices that are to be heard within public forums. As enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, all people have the right to express opposing ideas and opinions (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, n.d).

The Electoral Knowledge Network, (2012) published an article with a title ‘Media and Elections’. The role of media in providing this platform for debate and discussion is therefore vital. Media provides a mechanism for regular citizens to be heard and to therefore influence political agendas and campaign platforms, and sometimes garnering support and influencing fellow voters. Forms can include:

- Members of the public, lobby groups, experts with different perspectives, and candidates being interviewed by the media for their views on certain policies;
- Talkback radio and television in which the public air their opinions;

- Contestants' websites, social media networks, and so on, where the public can interact with them directly;
- News reports on press conferences, protests and other events held by interest groups;
- Citizen journalism....

According to Stremlau and Price, “the media serve as a forum for competing political actors to vie for power and to offer alternatives to the national project. This is both a strength and weakness (Stremlau and Price, 2009).

“It is a strength because it means that the media, and the press, in particular, can be a valuable space for reconciliation and dialogue between competing for political perspectives. When perspectives are engaged effectively this can help to reduce polarization, and further define and consolidate the state- and nation-building agenda. But the media’s ability to serve as a forum is a weakness for fragile states that may not have the institutions to manage this kind of discussion” (Ibid).

2.3. Theoretical Framework

2.3.1. Social Responsibility Theory

The Social Responsibility Theory is one among other press theories; some say, there are four theories, the others say that there are really just two theories of the press, Authoritarian and Libertarian, which the latter two theories, Social Responsibility and Soviet Communist are merely extensions (Campbell, 2004). Nevertheless, the Social Responsibility Theory is very important one; it is considered as a theory that should serve to the achievement of valid societal goals. According to this theory, the media have responsibilities toward society; the media should be available to more than a marginal group of people and present more than the opinions of influential politicians. Therefore, the essence of the Social Responsibility Theory is an affirmative role in advocating social justice for the general public, which is powerless.

The social responsibility tradition that received its philosophical basis in the American commission of 1947 was actually put into practice with much more determination and effects in countries other than the United States, especially in Western Europe in the two or three decades following the Second World War (McQuail, 2005). The idea was to put an order in media’s

scene of the Europe; it was a post-war period and Europe needed, more than anything else, an accountable media that will act responsibly toward demands of society, it will promote a social justice. In a way, for the media, social responsibility should be always the main concern.

The social responsibility model involved a number of ways in which the state could attempt to play a role in attempting to ensure that media fulfills their social obligations whilst at the same time trying, more or less, to retain the independence of the journalism and the freedom of the speech (Campbell, 2004) Mass media should provide citizens with information. They should identify the problems in our society, and unlawful activities of those who have power. Media also should have mobilization function, campaigning for societal purposes in the area of politics and economic development. Therefore, everywhere, social tasks come prior to media rights and freedoms.

The social responsibility model suggests that among others: the media have obligations to society; news media should be truthful, fair, objective and relevant; the media should be free, but self-regulated; the media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conducts (McQuail, 2005).

According to the Social Responsibility Theory, socially responsible media also should represent the public and speak for and to the public interest in order to hold government accountable. Kristie (Bunton, 1998) so, the media should be considered as ‘watchdog’ that the public relies on for revealing errors and wrongdoing by governmental institutions.

2.3.2. The Public Sphere Theory

A public sphere that functioned in the political realm arose first in Great Britain at the turn of the eighteenth century. Forces endeavoring to influence the decisions of state authority appealed to the critical public in order to legitimate demands before this new forum. In connection with this practice, the assembly of estates became transformed into a modern parliament- a process that was, of course, drawn out over the entire century (Habermas, 1984)

By ‘the public sphere’, we mean first of all, a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body (Ibid).

Dahlgren conceptualized the public sphere as consisting of three constitutive dimensions: structures, representation, and interaction. The structural dimension has to do with the formal institutional features. Most obviously, this includes media organizations, their political economy, ownership, control, regulation, and issues of their financing, as well as the legal frameworks defining the freedoms of—and constraints on—communication. The structural dimension thus directs our attention to such classic democratic issues as freedom of speech, access, and the dynamic of inclusion/exclusion. Beyond the organization of the media themselves, the structural dimension also points to society's political institutions, which serve as a sort of “political ecology” for the media and set boundaries for the nature of the information and forms of expression that circulates. A society where democratic tendencies are weak is not going to give rise to healthy institutional structures for the public sphere, which in turn means that the representational dimension will be inadequate (Dahlgren, 2009).

Journalism is traditionally seen as contributing to defining the public agenda and offering public means to provide citizens with information, ideas and debates about current affairs, which help facilitate informed opinion and participation in democratic politics. However, this traditional journalism has reached a historical turning point as, on a global level, there is massive growth in media outlets, the intensifying of conglomerate structures in media industries and the increasing globalization of media organizations, practices, and flows (Dahlgren, 2009).

Dahlgren sees audience evolution as a central element in the changing conditions of journalism. However, there are many reasons why citizens choose not to engage in politics. According to Dahlgren, “it is everyday economic realities in their more drastic forms that can inhibit democratic participation in direct and material ways: unemployment, economic insecurity, low wages, declining social services, growing class rifts and ecological threats. In the era of neoliberal global capitalism, the traditional tensions between market logics and democratic principles become acuter. The governments of nation-states have less maneuverability; real societal power drifts increasingly to the private corporate sector and thereby real societal power resides beyond democratic accountability. In turn, the formal political arena has become constricted, offering fewer opportunities for meaningful participation and thereby engendering disengagement” (Dahlgren, 2009).

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design deployed; the sampling technique used and the sources of data and data collection tools employed while undertaking this research work. It also finally discusses the data processing and analyzing of the research.

3.1. Research Design

The researcher used qualitative research design in a bid to generate depth of information about the research topic. As Polkinghorne (1983) noted, “qualitative research methods today are a diverse set, encompassing approaches such as empirical phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, protocol analysis and discourse analysis. By one common definition, all these methods rely on linguistic rather than numerical data and employ meaning-based rather than statistical forms of data analysis” (Polkinghorne, 1983).

3.2. Sampling

The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select the key informants. Purposive sampling was used because the respondents needed to have knowledge of the program in addition to their academic wisdom. Therefore, all interviewed sample scholars were lecturers in Bahir Dar University.

“Under non-probability sampling, the organizers of the inquiry purposively choose the particular units of the universe for constituting a sample on the basis that the small mass that they select out of a huge one will be typical or representative of the whole” (Kothari, 2014).

Thus, with the aim of obtaining detailed information on the issue, five producers of Yeketemoch Mederek program, two scholars of media and communication, two scholars of governance and development, one scholar of political science as well as four participants of the forum, were the initial sample sizes. However, there were also other samples that the researcher decided to incorporate during the course of the study with a belief that the information gathered was not adequate to advance the study and for the sake of verifying the findings. Moreover, the researcher took inputs from a symposium organized to discuss Yeketemoch Mederek program. The comments and opinions raised in the symposium were taken as a primary data.

Sample programs held in two randomly selected towns (Woreta and Adet) were reviewed. The two towns were among the 19 towns of the region where the third episode forums were held in 2016.

3.3. Sources of Data and Data Collecting Tools

The researcher used both primary and secondary sources of data. In addition to audio and video records of transmitted programs, the primary sources were producers of Yeketemoch Mederek program who organize the forum and facilitate the discussion, media and communication scholars who have demonstrable knowledge and experience in media, governance and development scholars, political science scholars and participants of the forum who partake in the discussion. Moreover, various books, journal articles, research papers and other publications related to media as a public forum and their contribution to the promotion of democracy and good governance were reviewed as secondary sources of data.

3.3.1. Primary Sources of Data

For this study, the researcher used in-depth interview as a primary tool of data collection.

In-depth interviews

Newcomb (1991), explaining the potency of interviewing, writes, “The primary strength of interviewing as a method is its capacity to range over multiple perspectives on a given topic.” He further explains that conducting manifold interviews helps to increase the information and broaden a point of view. Interview data also make possible the gathering of historical viewpoints on the subject area of the study (Ibid).

Patton (1987) also noted, “In-depth interviewing, also known as unstructured interviewing, is a type of interview which researchers use to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee’s point of view or situation; it can also be used to explore interesting areas for further investigation. This type of interview involves asking informants open-ended questions and probing wherever necessary to obtain data deemed useful by the researcher. As in-depth interviewing often involves qualitative data, it is also called qualitative interviewing.” (Patton, 1987)

In a bid to get detail information and respondents’ insight about the topic, the researcher found in-depth interview an ideal instrument. For this research, in-depth interviews will be conducted with the below-mentioned respondents:

- ✓ Producers of Yeketemoch Mederek Program
- ✓ Media and Communication Scholars
- ✓ Governance and development Scholars
- ✓ Political Science Scholars and
- ✓ Participants of the Forum

Key Informants	Sample Size	General Issues Discussed
Producers of Yeketemoch Mederek Program	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How the forum is organized: selection criteria of participants, time & place of the forum,...pre and post activities of the forum ✓ How it is facilitated: the roles of participants, government officials, and facilitators ✓ Selection criteria of up sounds for broadcast/publication ✓ The challenges & opportunities
Media and Communication Scholars	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The principles of journalism or responsibilities of media houses ✓ The contribution of such programs for the promotion of good governance ✓ The strong and weak sides of the program in view of journalism practice
Political Science and Governance and Development Scholars	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The relationship between media & democracy/good governance ✓ The contribution of such programs for the promotion of good governance
Participants of the Forum	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Their opinion about the program and overall organization of the forum

List of interviews and the general issues discussed with them

The other primary sources were the records of events. The researcher reviewed records of a forum held in two randomly selected towns. In addition to them, the researcher reviewed other

development stories done after the forum to check how the issues are well noted and to assess the progress of issues raised in the forums.

3.3.2. Secondary Sources of Data

Various books, journal articles, research papers and other publications related to media as a public forum were reviewed as secondary sources of data for this study. The survey study conducted by AMMA's Media Development and Plan Preparation Directorate is one of the secondary sources. These materials helped the researcher view the issues in different angles and strengthen his argument by making sound reason.

3.4. Data processing and analyzing

The researcher used the descriptive method of data analysis. The data obtained, from respondents via in-depth interview and by reviewing the recorded programs, were organized and frameworks were identified based on the data. While holding in-depth interviews similar open-ended questions were forwarded to the key informants within the same category. Sorting the data into different frameworks which were taken from the research questions and using the frameworks for descriptive analysis was the next step.

When for instance one of the key informant's answer or opinion is different from the rest, his/her response is put on the analysis part showing the difference. However, when all respondents have the same response on a certain issue, their response was summarized and presented as one or presented them showing how one's opinion support the opinion of others.

Theoretical frameworks and various principles were used for analyzing the descriptions and transcripts of recorded materials in a scientific manner. Thus, the researcher had different phases/levels of data analysis, which began from the first-day interview and ended when the researcher claimed he has had enough information on the issue.

In the main time, in addition to different manuals of the media, the survey study conducted by the AMMA's Media Development and Plan Preparation Directorate was used to cross check the facts.

3.4.1. Content analysis

Yeketemoch Mederek program has different episodes and this research focused on the third episode in which the forum was held in 19 towns of the region. From those towns, the researcher randomly selected two towns the -10th and 15th which are Woreta and Adet- and analyzed video records of the programs aired on television. The forum was held in those two towns in April 17, 2016 and in June 05, 2016 respectively. The radio program was transmitted live on the radio. However, the television program started to be transmitted after about a week. Producers of the program divided the issues raised in the forum in different themes such as good governance issues, infrastructure issues and social issues and aired each town's forum in three programs.

The programs are analyzed so as to identify issues related to good governance, check the composition (in terms of age and sex) of attendants, evaluate the subsistence of issues raised, check the level of participation of attendants and so on. The data gained through content analysis was presented throughout the analysis part of the fourth chapter along with the data gained via in-depth interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

In this particular chapter, the analysis of the data obtained using mainly in-depth interviews and content analysis were presented. The data obtained through both techniques were analyzed and presented simultaneously. The first part of this chapter discussed the general discourse of Yeketemoch Mederek program in order to give a vivid picture of the program and since the findings also relayed on the process of producing the program too. Thus, this chapter first presented the general picture of Yeketemoch Mederek program and its contribution to the promotion of good governance and democracy in Amhara Regional state. It also revealed what the program is like in view of principles of journalism and how the audiences perceive the program. Moreover, this chapter reviewed the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goal and challenges and opportunities producers of the program face.

4.1. Description of Yeketemoch Mederek Program

Yeketemoch Mederek is one of the programs produced by AMMA. The program has been held in different episodes. The first episode was held before eight years only in zonal towns. After some gap and evaluating the first episode, the second episode was held in the same zonal towns. The third episode started in December 2016 after evaluating the 2nd episode. In this episode, the media started to organize in non-zonal towns too. As such, the forum was held in 19 towns of the region in the third episode.

4.1.1. Objective of Yeketemoch Mederek Program

The document found in the media stated objective of the program categorizing into three perspectives. The document reads the objectives as follows:

In view of the society: -

- Initiate dwellers of the town, the sense of ownership in good governance and development issues of their town.
- Develop the society's right to speak their idea freely and
- To let them reveal the development and good governance problems of their town and make them part of the solution

In view of the Mass Media Agency:-

- To ensure the right of the whole society of the region to use the media
- To practically show the media is striving to change the society and
- To develop freedom of thought in the region

In view of the government:-

- To create an open discussion between administrators and dwellers about the development of their towns
- To enable the government to closely follow good governance and development issues of towns
- To promote good governance by halting the existing service delivery problems in towns

4.1.2. Production Stages

Yeketemoch Mederek program production has three main stages. They are preproduction, production and postproduction stages. All interviewed journalists' responses about the production stages of the program are almost the same, despite the variety of words used to express their idea. The researcher summed up their idea as follows:-

4.1.2.1. Pre-production stage

The preproduction stage is the first step of production in Yeketemoch Mederek program. In this stage, journalists will be sent to conduct a mini research whether to hold the forum or not and find out the major problems found in the city. In their stay for 3 or 4 days, the journalists do the mini research by reviewing prior accomplishments, reports, documents and talking to the society and the administrators. It is with this research result that the media would decide where to give priority.

The document found in the media stated the third episode towns were selected based on the criteria below:

- Structured as a medium city administration
- Two towns from each zone selected with their town level and

- Mixing from all zones

Journalist II told the researcher that the journalists have no say in the selection of towns. He said the media management members decide where to hold the discussion based on the quota given and the mini research conducted. The request from the society is increasing from time to time, but priority is given based on mini- researcher's data. The research conducted will help the media not only to identify areas where priority should be given, their experience could be shared and their problems are severe, but also to identify issues to focus.

After selecting the town, 4 to 5 days earlier to the forum banners are posted in highly populated areas like city squares and bus stations. In addition, spot announcements are made on the Amhara TV and all FM radios of the media continuously and repeatedly when the day approaches.

Invitation letters are sent out to all town and zone administrators, police and anticorruption, ombudsman and human rights bureau. Some regional or federal bureaus are also invited to the forum, based on the issues found in the mini research. Journalist I told the researcher that, “for example in Kombocha, there were critical problems related to the ongoing railway construction. Since it is a federal project neither zonal nor regional officials could solve them. So the invitation letter was sent to the Ethiopian Railway Corporation. The same is true for Lalibela where issues related with tourism needed the intervention of the federal ministry”.

A week earlier to the event, the media send one person who would check whether the hall is suitable for holding the discussion, availability of chairs and telephone service, electric power supply (availability of generators in case of power interruption) etc. That person reports the gaps and the organizers would discuss with the city administrators on how to fill the gaps. It is based on that person’s report about the readiness, that the production crew goes to the place with all their material.

A production crew consisting of about 15 members (Cameraperson, sound person, director, journalists, car driver...) is organized and a leader is selected. So far all the forums are held on Sundays, so the crew goes to the place earlier- usually Thursday to far towns and if it is near to Bahir Dar, they go there on Friday, to make things ready by installing the materials.

In addition to radio and TV announcements, the journalists announce the call via speakers in the towns reminding the dwellers in case there are individuals who did not hear about those announcements on radio and TV. They do it at least twice going from village to village usually the city administration helps them to do so by providing a car and other announcement materials. The organizers have started to make announcements by themselves since the 3rd episode because when the announcements were made by the city administration, most people thought it was regular meetings and tended to pay less attention. Journalist I asserts, “had the announcement been made by the city administration, the society might not participate actively and it would have been difficult to make a free discussion”.

The crew members hold a meeting in the hotel they book, every night starting from their arrival. In their discussion, the crew members discuss the opportunities and challenges they may face. All members present their part and evaluate their daily activity.

On Sunday, they usually meet at 6 AM and start to adjust materials, arranging the stage, check the live linkage and wait for their guests.

4.1.2.2. Production stage

In this stage, the actual forum is held. It includes all activity from the beginning of the discussion to the end. Though the announcement indicates the time that the discussion would start at 8 AM, quite often the participants arrive late up until 9 AM. The journalists feel this late coming is cultural and often times as a result of Sunday mall and prayers in church.

The forum is started by the facilitator. After introducing himself (all the discussions so far led by men, even most development stories are produced by male journalists) and objective of the forum, ten to fifteen minutes is given for the mayor to present the overall performances of the town administration and the achievements and failures scored. It is a starting point for the discussion.

Listening to the live transmission of the discussion, the public will march to the hall to attend and the hall will be full. The organizers seem to know this, so they let latecomers watch via the screen/projector if possible or on TV outside the hall.

After the mayor's presentation, the turn is given to the participants. The researcher confirmed that the speaking chance is given to people standing outside hall too. According to journalists and participants of the forum, the chance is given at a zero chance. Some said the priority is given to elders, people with disability and females. Often the chance to speak is given randomly in rows turn by turn.

As stated earlier, the objective and ground rules of the forum are told to participants before the beginning of the discussion. The ground rules read as follows:

Dos and don'ts of participants:-

Dos

- The participants come to the hall freely and without any coercion or threat
- All participants are entitled to equal rights in the discussion
- All participants' ideas are respected
- Chance will be given taking into consideration that opportunities are given to all parts of the society (male, female, people with disability, elders, farmers...) and
- Participants can express their idea freely

Don'ts

- Never speak unless the chance is given
- Never try to stop the speakers- expressing support or opposition to the speaker's idea either by making noise or clapping is prohibited
- Only five minutes is given for a speaker
- For the sake of avoiding defamation, never call names of individuals. However, it is possible to report the problems in the office of the concerned body
- So as not to waste time talking about individual problems, it is preferable to raise problems pertinent to all the society
- It is not allowed to leave if you ask questions and
- Never repeat ideas

The organizers meet the administrators on the stage just like the participants. Journalist I told the researcher that they have no contact before the discussion, but some people think they make discussions with the administrators before the forum. He said the administrators might assign someone to help them get speakers and other facilities.

The maximum number of individuals who get the chance to speak is usually not more than 30 due to a shortage of time and since some participants take much more of the time than the given five minutes and are not willing to stop when they are told. On the other hand, some individuals raise an issue, which touches many of the participants' ideas and they just let them speak. Issues, especially about infrastructures, social service delivery institutes, and service delivery of the city administration are not personal.

Since the chance cannot be given to all and some participants may be afraid of the consequence if they speak on the stage or do not have the habit of speaking in the presence of a large audience, the moderator lets them write their opinion/question on a piece of paper. Someone from the organizers is assigned to compile all the ideas written on paper and divide them into themes by classifying them as health, electric, water etc. the compiled questions will be given to the moderator and he would read them aloud to all.

The response is given based on the status of the administrators starting from the lower to the higher ones- woreda, zone, region and federal respectively. The administrators give responses to each question including those asked on a piece of paper. If it is a personal issue, the pertaining person is given the chance to speak. Journalist I told the researcher an example that, if someone says the judge is corrupt, the chance is given to the judge for balancing. The administrators are supposed to give feedback regarding the issues found in their respective domain.

The administrators give expansions for the issues raised in the forum and make promises by setting deadlines when they will fix the problems. In the forum, no one writes minutes of the meeting. Sometimes professionals from the regional ombudsman take the stage to make a brief speech about good governance and to introduce their contact addresses.

Finally, the moderator closes the discussion by expressing gratitude and appreciation to all attendants and sponsors in the name of the media.

Everything said from the introduction to the closing speech is transmitted live on the radio channels (Amhara Radio, Bahir Dar FM, Dessie FM, and Debre Birehan FM). Then the radio task is concluded here.

The role of a moderator:-

- Facilitate the discussion
- Try to calm down when participants become hot/emotional
- Stop them when they start to disgrace others, repeat ideas or raise issues not related with the town
- Allow them to express their opinion freely

4.1.2.3. Postproduction stage

This is the last step of the production process. The radio production is left with development stories, which are done after some months. The TV and newspaper production, however, is not yet finished.

TV program production

Yeketemoch Mederek is not a regular program or it has no fixed time of transmission, but when a forum is held, it is transmitted by allocating some time for it.

Editing is the next step. According to Journalist I, “We edit not to remove some ideas, but to use the air time properly, which is expensive. We cut off an item if there is a repetition of an idea. For example, many participants might raise a single problem like water or power, but we take one’s opinion. We also omit the silence/gap created in-between speeches”.

While editing the programs, the video editor who is also a member of the crew, along with program producers divides issues based on their themes. For example, one program would be related to good governance and the other would be on infrastructure. In editing, questions will usually be followed by answers.

After mixing, the editor in chief reviews the programs and evaluates them based on the production elements like the flow of idea, sound and audio clarity etc.

Spots are produced and aired to inform viewers when the program will be transmitted. Starting from the third episode, the journalists go again after at least 5 months for follow up- to check whether the issues are solved or not. For instance, in Mota, the administrators themselves call the media to make development stories.

When going for follow up, the journalists review the video records and select the main issues/problems. They go to towns with the name, phone number, and picture of the person who speaks on the forum. They contact those people who raised questions and ask them the status of issues. If the problem is not solved, the journalists go to the administrators again and ask them why it is not solved by referring to the date they promised to solve. If the problem cannot be solved at the woreda or region level, the journalists take the issue to the federal level. Journalist II told the researcher that he has aired news with interviews involving the federal road authority and the researcher confirmed that. He believes doing so increases the opportunity of solving the problems.

Based on the information obtained, the journalists produce programs and news by including the reporter's opinion/comment (which they call a development story). The media send journalists to produce programs and news for radio, TV and Bekur newspaper.

Bekur Newspaper production

Reporters of Bekur newspaper go along with radio and TV producers to do media coverage. The issues raised in Yeketemoch Mederek are published on the newspaper's page called Feteḥ and Melkam Astedader (meaning *Justice and good governance*). This is a regular page where other good governance issues are treated. When issues of Yeketemoch Mederek appear on this page, they are given a subtitle 'Fit lefit' (meaning *face to face*)—the name is given because the forum lets both the governors and administrators come face to face for discussion.

As to journalist V, "just like the TV production, we make a slide editing which cannot be taken as censorship. As to him, the editing task could be correcting the grammar". He added, "Since the society has already heard the live transmission if we do any major editing like omitting issues to cover up for the government or other, we will lose the public trust so we don't cut off ideas. Maybe if participants call individuals' names violating the ground rules of the discussion, we

may omit that for the sake of avoiding the risk of defamation otherwise there is nothing we omit for any reason”.

4.2. The role of media in the prevalence of democracy and good governance

4.2.1. AMMA’s experience in contributing to the prevalence of democracy and good governance

In addition to Yeketemoch Mederek program, AMMA has other programs that deal with good governance. Journalist II said, “We have a program called ‘*And Leand*’ (meaning *one to one* in Amharic) like the Hard Talk of the BBC where officials are interviewed face to face. ‘Teteyek’ (be asked) is also a live transmitted radio/TV program. ‘Mestawot’ (meaning *Mirror in* Amharic) is the other program that deals with issues related to good governance. Mestawot is the former name of Yeketemoch Mederek but currently, the media is using Mestawot for researched and recorded investigative programs”.

There are some similarities between Mestawot and Yeketemoch Mederek programs. Both are good governance related programs and are made based on relevant mini-researches. Both have different stages such as pre, actual and post production stages. They, however, differ in that when Mestawot program focuses on a specific issue like for example water problems of certain areas, Yeketemoch Mederek deals with any problem in the towns. Mestawot program producers interview administrators and the society separately and after cross checking both sides only a TV program with a length of 30-40 minutes is made by mixing the inputs, but Yeketemoch Mederek program is a live face to face discussion aired on several FMs and gets coverage on TV and newspaper.

There are also some sponsored programs produced by the media like programs of Bahir Dar University and the University of Gondar. According to journalist I, “The Institutes want the media to promote their interest using their programs, but we act professionally. The institutes choose only the topic and we make it according to principles of the profession”. He claims, “Programs like Yeketemoch Mederek gave us the power and helps our programs to be watched/heard”. He believes, “the closer you get to the truth, the more society would appreciate your work”.

“The social responsibility model suggests that among others: the media have obligations to society; news media should be truthful, fair, objective and relevant; the media should be free, but self-regulated; the media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conducts”. (McQuail, 2005).

Both journalist II and IV believe none of the programs they produce are like Yeketemoch Mederek program in terms of popularity. Journalist I says, “We want the society’s active participation in other media shows too, to tell us the problems as they did in the forum”.

The researcher followed different media outlets of the Agency and found out the media’s effort to let the voice of the society be heard is appreciable. Unlike many other government media of the nation, the journalists tried to show, in their programs and news, the problems that the society is facing.

Participant II believes, “If the forum was organized by other media of the nation, the same excess attendance with active participation could be witnessed”. He argues the society is in an extraordinary level of need of expressing their grievance and no matter what the media is, be private or state owned/regional or federal. Participant I and III, on the other hand, argue that “The media has built a reputation and has acquired credibility as a result of other programs and news of the media. Thus, such a big number of people would not attend the forum if it was organized by other media”.

Chakchouk summarized the role media plays as “The roles of media and civil society representatives remain important in providing a platform for citizen voices, and their efforts are necessary to encourage individuals to engage in public debates. They also have a key watchdog role in monitoring and reporting on governance issues, and working to preserve the freedoms for citizens through capacity building training and advocacy campaigns” (Chakchouk, 2015)

The researcher watched when the regional administrator being asked live by a journalist and other individuals by calling directly to the media. Different regional and zonal administrators were also asked in those programs. This implies the media’s effort to contribute to the development of democracy and good governance in the region.

4.2.2. Yeketemoch Mederek's role in the prevalence of democracy and good governance

Yeketemoch Mederek is a program made based on the forum organized by AMMA. In the forum, both the governors and the society meet face to face and members of society raise their issue, appreciate if there is anything to be appreciated (though not common). Both groups might have other similar meetings, but this one is different in that the discussion will be aired live on radio and will have media coverage on TV and newspaper. The other is the presence of a third party who will serve as a bridge between them. Moreover, unlike the other discussions, there is a means to check the status/progress of issues and publicize the results.

The researcher categorized the data obtained via in-depth- interview and content analysis in five main categories showing how the program is helping to promote good governance and democracy in the region. In short, how the media has become a socially relevant and responsible actor.

A. Creating awareness

Increasing awareness is one of the duties of media houses. The communication theorist Alfaro (2006) stated that today the media constitute a crucial source of civic education and legitimization of democratic power.

“Political socialization is a particular type of political learning whereby people develop the attitudes, values, beliefs, opinions, and behaviors that are conducive to becoming good citizens in their country. Socialization is largely a one-way process through which young people gain an understanding of the political world through their interaction with adults and the media” (Greenstein, 1969).

One of the key informants, who is a lecturer in Department of Political Science and International Relations at Bahir Dar University said, “When for example, a person complains about not getting an appropriate service from a certain organization; that implies she/he knows the services that should be given by that organization. Therefore, Yeketemoch Mederek program is socializing the principles of good governance and that will have great importance for the development of democratic system”.

According to Governance and Development lecturer II, “In Amhara region, good governance has become an agenda everywhere, after the beginning of Yeketemoch Mederek program. He said, now the society has started to categorize which domain their problems fall- good governance, policy, infrastructural, strategy... the program has played a significant role in letting the society know what kind of problem they are facing. They even have started to suggest what the possible solutions could be”.

The PSIR lecturer said, “Yeketemoch Mederek program helps both the society and the governors to avoid misconceptions, to make things clear and reach on mutual understanding”.

There could be an activity which the society takes as less important, but which actually could be vital for them. And those kinds of forums will help them know the real activities being done by the governors with their merits. “The press plays a role in the political training of citizens and democratic culture by informing them of the scope of public policies, the management, and conduct of affairs by those responsible at both the state and grass-roots level, by providing and offering the members of the community the means of communicating with each other”. (Beetham and Boyle, 2009).

The forum helps the society know what the administrators are doing for their town. At the same time, it will help the administrators know their gap and what the people want. For higher officials, the forum helps them know the actual performance of the administrators. They can crosscheck their report with the comments of the society which is the first-hand information.

The media is discharging its responsibility of informing the concerned body to find a solution. The higher officials could use it as an input to control or evaluate the other officials under their domain. Asked about this issue, the regional government responded the following via the regional communication bureau:

“The issues raised are transmitted on TV and FM radios and published on Bekur newspaper. As a result, higher officials of the region follow the programs, take the issues and discuss them in detail in different high-level meetings as well as in meetings held by the house of people representatives of kebele, town, woreda, and region.”

At other times, they might only see the reports which could be falsified or might hear feedbacks from the meetings organized by the administrators and attended by the people who do not represent the whole population of the town.

B. Serving as a bridge

Yeketemoch Mederek program is serving as a bridge between the administrators and the society. In the forum, the administrators are trying to make things clear to the society. Governance and Development Lecturer II said, “The people usually don’t know the internal process of government. When things become clear due to discussions, they will know where the problem is? Whether it can be solved or not? what their contribution would be?”.

According to the interviewee from the office of the Ombudsman, “The major problem in good governance is a lack of discussion between government and society. Most parts of the society do not know what is being done, the budget, the policy and so on”. The above two excerpts indicate the contribution of the forum for exercising transparency.

Obviously, as Ethiopia is a developing nation, not every problem of the society can be solved in a short time, but things shall be clear to the society. The following response from the regional government supports this idea, “Administrators of the towns take each issue and set a short and long term plan to solve issues. They make the issues- which are impossible to do and which require adequate time and budget- clear to the society. By doing so, many are the areas where problems such as piped water supply, health care service, road infrastructure, a poor service delivery of Kebeles, unfair consumer goods distribution and land related cases are solved and improved”.

According to regional government, the program’s contribution is so high because it helps to have a full understanding between the regional government and the society and is one of the activities of building a democratic system. It gives information to the government about accomplishment gaps in those areas. It also helps to expose and fight misdeeds.

Habermas’s conception of the public sphere (and the role of the media in contemporary democracies) suggests that the public sphere is an impartial space in society and free from both

state and corporate control. Within this ‘impartial’ space, the media should make information affecting the public good available and facilitate a free, open and reasoned public dialogue that guides the public to influence the political direction (Curran, 2000).

C. Exercising democracy

Freedom of speech is a principle of both good governance and democracy. Ramaphosa (1998) noted, “...the mass media is one such mechanism, or at least should be, for deepening democracy. For media to play a constructive role, it needs to be free from any legal or political constraints. It should be protected by freedoms of speech, association, and publication. It needs to be protected from censorship or banning. It needs, in short, to be free to say what it likes. It needs to be independent from government control and needs the institutional capacity to represent a broad diversity of perspectives and views” (Ramaphosa, 1998).

Article 29 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia constitution guarantees right of thought, opinion, freedom of expression and the press as follows:

- (1) Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference.
- (2) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any other media of his choice...

Writing the principle without practical implementation has no relevance to the people. If we say, everyone has the right to freedom of expression, then how the public can express his or her idea is the next issue. People can express their idea in public demonstrations, public forums and especially using media. There are international institutions that criticize Ethiopian government for imprisoning bloggers and journalists for writing their opinion and trying to criticize the ruling party and its leaders.

“The perceived political influence in Ethiopian newsrooms is among the highest in the world... Ethiopia is also among the ‘top leaders’ when it comes to perceived editorial influences from politicians, military, police and state security.” (Skjerdal, 2017)

Joel Simon is the executive director of the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). He told VOA that the length of the journalists' detention has moved Ethiopia up to the second leading jailer of journalists in Africa behind its neighbor Eritrea.

Amnesty International's 2016/17 report noted, "Prolonged protests over political, economic, social and cultural grievances were met with excessive and lethal force by police. The crackdown on the political opposition saw mass arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment, unfair trials and violations of the rights to freedom of expression and association".

The Human Rights Watch report also stated, "In Ethiopia, in 2015 there were continuing government crackdowns on opposition political party members, journalists, and peaceful protesters, many of whom experienced harassment, arbitrary arrest, and politically motivated prosecutions".

Then how can the society express their idea? Yeketemoch Mederek has created this platform where the people freely express their idea.

Journalist I and III told the researcher that they met many participants who said, "From now onwards I don't mind if my issue is not solved. I have spoken and that is enough for me". Here it is possible to imagine how the society is in need of a platform where they can express their feeling. Since pent up emotions can explode causing unprecedented harm, a forum for self-expression is very important.

Journalist I said, "We want the society's active participation in other media events too, to tell us the problems as they do in the forum". In the symposium, a representative from North Shewa Zone said, "now the public starts to speak their idea even without asking them to speak. They are developing the habit because they see their problems being solved". An interviewee from the office of Ombudsman also said, "The discussion helps to develop the culture of transparency and accountability, which are the core principles of good governance".

From the above comments, we can infer that the culture of expressing their idea is being developed.

Admitting the presence of many people who still get a deaf ear when they try to speak their problem, the Minister of Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development

(MoPSHRD) said in the symposium, the contribution of the media in the development of democracy, like other nations, cannot be brought at a time. It needs a process.

D. Alarming the leaders

According to journalist V, “people say the problems start to be solved since the first time you plan to come to our town”. This sentence indicates two things. One is how the media has become powerful and started feared by officials. The other is there were problems the administrators could solve but did not for a variety of unknown reasons perhaps one person has impunity. Yeketemoch Mederek program has a great contribution to the promotion of good governance. The evidence is the testimony received from every town visited where many things were improving. After the forum problems of road, water, power and so on were solved.

Journalist IV said, “At the beginning, most woreda administrators didn’t want the forum to be held, but now, understanding its relevance, they themselves started to request the media to organize the forum. He added, now the administrators have started to be careful. If I do something wrong, that will be revealed by the media”. This is what accountability is.

According to the Social Responsibility Theory, socially responsible media also should represent the public and speak for and to the public interest in order to hold government accountable. (Bunton, 1998)

Journalist III strengthens this idea. He said, the administrators have become alerted to solve the problems and all that we want is to get the problems solved.

Asked about its importance, the PSIR lecturer, said the importance is not limited to the town where the discussion is held, but to others who listen to/watch the program.

E. Naming and shaming

Media institutions could contribute to the prevalence of democracy and good governance by revealing the bad administrations. Journalist II said, “As a media, our maximum power is publicizing the wrong doings and inform the concerned body, but balancing by asking the pertaining body. We ask officials based on hierarchy. If for example, the problem is beyond the town’s capacity, we ask zonal, then regional and finally the federal officials.

The interviewee from Ombudsman office believes the program has the power to develop the culture of good governance in the areas where the forum is held and the media is outreached because rather than getting a criminal official punished in court, public shaming will have a greater effect on the society. He added, “Others who hear the publicity would take care not to commit similar crimes. Since they publicize the hidden issues, the show has a contribution for the development of the culture of good governance, but it needs continues and holistic effort”. Regarding the similar method used by media and ombudsman, the representative says, “Unlike courts, the ombudsman has no power to punish/imprison. The highest power of the institute is media. We use media to publicize to the society. When there are organizations which do not perform according to our recommendation and are not cooperative with us, we write a report to the house of people representatives. The second is publicizing via media stating the resistance of the organization to accept the recommendations and we call it ‘public shaming’... since the public is the ultimate power holder, our report will help them make the right decision. The last step is taking the case to the court because not committing the recommendation/decision of the commission within 5 years is a crime, but media is often used in many nations of the world”

4.2.3. Issues raised in the forum

According to journalist II, “Most of the issues raised by the participants were related to land and good governance. There were few infrastructural issues too”. Journalist I also says, “Most of the questions were related to infrastructure development especially water, road, and electricity, but all these are related, one way or the other, with good governance”. He believes there is always maladministration behind every infrastructural problem. “In some towns, for example, the Coble stone road built has a poor quality (that means there is another problem behind poor quality). Some have built it in their village, the area where the majority of the administrators live have a better facility”. Participant III agrees with journalist I that most of the problems, be personal or infrastructural, are caused by problems of lack of good governance.

Participant IV, however, says, “Most of the questions raised were problems of good governance especially related to urban land. Water problem, power problem and some individual/personal problems were also there”.

According to journalist I, “Other issues are like justice problems, unjustified expenditure of government’s budget for ceremonial purposes, favoritism in services delivery, absence from working place, poor service delivery, too many meetings etc.”. As to him, all these problems are related to good governance.

The other common problem in most towns was when farmers who live around cities lost their land for development purpose; they only are paid in cash as compensation. Then, the farmers asked urban land for their children too. Soon a directive was issued stating when farmers are displaced from their land due to development or urban expansion; their children aged 18 and above shall get urban land like any other urban dwellers.

According to the regional government, “Most of the issues are related to delivery of social services, absence, and interruption of power and water supply, tax collection, urban land administration, road infrastructure, the supply of consumer goods, bad service delivery, the absence of justice etc.”.

Some people raise their personal case and start to explain from the scratch especially issues related to land. Journalist I said, “Sometimes when we think the case is critical, we let the person speak. There were occasions when we found the problem was due to the administrators and get the problems solved immediately. So if females, people with disability and elders raise personal issues we let them speak, because they are vulnerable. One’s problem could be a problem of others too”. The study conducted by the media also indicates 55.6 percent of the respondents say the participants raise more problems of the area than personal issues.

In some towns, participants raise issues that could not be addressed at that forum. Journalist IV told the researcher his experience in Debark. He said, “Though the instruction was given that the discussions should be confined to problems of the town, few individuals said a problem in Debark or Addis Ababa is also our problem as Ethiopians and so does Wolkayit’s. We treated all their issues except few points that might lead to a severe problem”.

Some raise their complaint knowing that they have no legal ground- as if the administrators have made a mistake- with a belief that if they speak in the forum they would win, but we try to be rational/fair/balanced. We knew that everyone who is crying is not a victim. There are many who raise their ordinary issues. Generally, most of the problems in most city administrations are the

same. So some say the issues raised in the forum are ours too. According to the study conducted by the media, 64% of the respondents believe the issues raised by the participants are true.

Generally speaking, issues of good governance, land, infrastructure problems, personal issues, and few issues out of the agenda are among the major discussion areas of the forum. But most issues of all kind are related to good governance.

4.2.4. Participants of the forum

As cited by Moges (2012) The concept of a pluralistic public sphere is increasingly used to denote how the media should be structured in order for them to perform the types of function that the eighteenth-century public sphere performed., the media is expected to be organized in such a way that it: (Banda, 2009).

- Can be open to all people, regardless of their standing or position in society. As such, the media must be accommodating to women as well.
- Must encourage voluntary participation of those who want to participate in the formation of public opinion.
- Must be open to all shades of opinion.
- Must facilitate discussion of matters of state policy and action.
- Must allow for the criticism of the way state power is organized, or whatever else may be criticized.

In this regard, Yeketemoch Mederek forum is open for all. Journalist I said, “Not only dwellers of the town but farmers who live around the towns and administered under the town attend the forum. They are the ones who are being evacuated from their land for the sake of development”. As to him, there were many people who traveled from Addis Ababa to the towns to participate in the forums.

The researcher reviewed sample TV programs and confirmed the presence of farmers from their dressing style and the issues they raised. Women, men, youth, people with disability, different professionals also attend the forum. From this, it is possible to conclude that the forum is open for all. The announcement is made to all without any discrimination. Kovach & Rosenstiel

(2007) noted “...Just as important, this forum must be for all parts of the community, not just the affluent or demographically attractive”

On the side of the governors, usually, all officials of the town, some zone administrators and few region administrators attend the forum. In addition, representatives from anticorruption, ombudsman and human rights partake in the discussion. A respondent from ombudsman told the researcher that they always receive invitation letters to participate in the discussions.

4.2.5. The support of regional government

The researcher asked the regional government whether it is using the complaint raised on Yeketemoch Mederek as an input or not. The response gained from the regional communication bureau was,

“Yes, the issues raised are transmitted on TV and FM radios and appear in Bekur newspaper. As a result, higher officials of the region follow the programs, take the issues and discuss them in detail in different high-level meetings as well as in meetings held by the house of people representatives of kebele, woreda, and region”.

Journalist IV supports the above idea, “The government supports and motivates us. The higher officials of the region use the program as an input”. He revealed the discrepancy of attitude between the regional and woreda administrators. “The attitude of the regional governor and a woreda administrator towards the program is different. When the regional administrators believe the program should be aired and the problems have to be solved, the woreda administrators, however, fear the disclosure of their misdeeds. As a result, the higher officials want the program to continue”.

Governance and Development Lecturer II blames the officials that “for example in Mota, the society exposed the bad administration of an official, but when the society expect him to be punished or resign, the regional government gave him a better position in the region”. Other two journalists and one participant also agreed with the lecturer that if the person has good political commitment and if he is loyal to the ruling party, he will either stay in power or will be assigned to a better position no matter how the society is dissatisfied with his administration.

The response of the Bureau about the issues raised in the forums is the same as that of the journalists' and participants'. This implies the bureau closely follows the program. The bureau admitted the presence of good governance issues.

The regional government claimed it has been supporting the agency to fill its gaps in many ways. That is improving media leaders' capacity by sharing experience, strengthening boards of directorates, improving the capacity of professionals of the media by giving training, working to fulfill latest media technologies of the time and working to increase the number of transmission stations and coverage.

“The government is helping the program paying a special attention, by addressing any constraints for its success. If there are leaders who are not ready for the discussion are found, high corrective measure is taken to bring them to the track”, said the regional Communication Bureau.

The commitment of some regional bureaus who attend the forum regularly is also an indicator of regional government's support to the program. Journalist I said, “Since the towns are evaluated based on the feedback gained in the forum, Construction, and Housing Development Agency, from the regional and zone, always go with us. They give directions, evaluate woreda administrators' performance and use the issues as an input”.

The regional government wants the program to be strong, said journalist III. One higher management member of the AMMA told participants of the symposium that “We alone can't do without the support and commitment of the government... there are high government officials who support the program”

This was what all representatives of the opposition parties appreciate most and want to be strengthened. They all were quite sure about the support and goodwill of the regional government. The regional government said, “the forum is being held not only by the intention of the media agency but also based on the plan of the regional government's task for the prevalence of good governance”. A representative of Zami FM recognizes this saying, though not at full, it seems the regional government paves the way by giving the media and journalists independence.

Recognizant of the pressure that could come from the side of some officials, a representative from Abay FM said that they have a similar live program named "Meftew Menden new?" (What is the solution) in which the society participate over the phone on a given issue like for example the recent uprising in Oromia region. She, like other participants of the symposium, stressed the need for real change. "The regional government shall remove the corrupt administrators whom the society doesn't like, but not re-appoint them to other positions in another place". All representatives of the opposition parties support her idea and demand the officials to be accountable.

4.3. 'YeketemochMederek' program in view of journalism principles

4.3.1. Journalism must provide a forum for public criticism and comment

The concept of the news media as a civic forum is most closely associated with the work of Jurgen Habermas, who has been widely influential. Habermas's ideal notion of a public sphere is predicated on the notion of widespread discussion about public affairs in civic society (Habermas, 1998).

The idea of a public sphere is a meeting place or debating forum, facilitating informed deliberation about the major issues of the day and mediating between citizens and the state.

Yeketemoch Mederek is a discussion held in towns of the region. The discussion is organized by the media and journalists lead the discussion. Usually the public raise criticisms against their leaders. The program best fits the principle of journalism's obligation to provide a forum for public criticism and comment. In the symposium, the Minister for Government Communication Affairs Bureau said the program is an example for public sphere and deliberative democracy.

"By 'the public sphere', we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body". (Habermas, 1984)

4.3.2. The essence of journalism is a discipline of verification

"Seeking out multiple witnesses, disclosing as much as possible about sources, or asking various sides for comment, all signal such standards. This discipline of verification is what separates

journalism from other modes of communication, such as propaganda, fiction or entertainment. However, the need for the professional method is not always fully recognized or refined. While journalism has developed various techniques for determining facts, for instance, it has done less to develop a system for testing the reliability of journalistic interpretation”. (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007)

The threat of defamation

In the symposium, the major issue of the argument was on whether to call names of officials or not. Asked about the threat of defamation, Journalist III answered rhetorically saying which one is more harmful? Allowing them to speak freely or prevent them by controlling -fearing defamation. Which one will help to get the problems solved? He seems to support calling of names on the forum.

Focusing on how this role should be carried out in accordance with the fundamental principles of Journalism, Kovach and Rosenstiel wrote “Yet in a new age, it is more important, not less, that this public discussion be built on the same principle as the rest of journalism, starting with truthfulness, facts, and verification. A debate steeped in prejudice and supposition only inflames” (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007)

If once false information is aired, it is too difficult to correct it. The measurement producers take to solve this problem is telling the ground rules at the beginning of the discussion and trying to balance by giving the concerned person a chance to reply or comment on issues. The participants are allowed to say the position or work title of the person they are referring to. If it is a personal issue, the pertaining person will be given the chance to speak. Journalist I told the researcher an example that, if someone says the judge failed to deliver justice, in that case, chance will be given to the judge for balance. The administrators are supposed to give feedback for the issues found in their respective domain. Sometimes the media may invite the ex-administrators including the old mayor to attend and response.

In the symposium, a representative from opposition parties said, it is good not to call names of officials because constitutionally defaming is a crime. Participant II also supported this idea. He remembered the presence of a group of individuals who intentionally tried to defame some

officials. “Few issues were found out to be false in later probes after the forum, but the falsehood was already aired live on radio. Due to this, it has to be verified before publicity”.

The other opposition party representative disagrees with the above idea. As to him naming and shaming is one principle of democracy. Thus, leaders who perform better shall be praised and the fewer performers shall be ashamed of their work.

4.3.3. Journalists must make the significant interesting and relevant

“The journalists' task is to find the way to make the significant interesting for each story and finding the right mix of the serious and the less serious that offers an account of the day. Perhaps it is best understood this way: Journalism is storytelling with a purpose”. (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007)

Quality is measured both by how much a work engages its audience and enlightens it. This means journalists must continually ask what information has the most value to citizens and in what form people are most likely to assimilate it. Unlike many other television programs, Yeketemoch Mederek program lacks the value of entertainment. Of course, such programs may not necessarily have a room for entertainment, but at least it would be better if there were mechanisms to ease the tension. The program from the beginning to the end is full of tension. The issues raised are serious, the tone of the speakers is strong and/or touching, and the atmosphere, in general, does not give comfort both for the participants and audiences. Journalism lecturer II suggested, “At the end of the discussion, it would be nice if there would be something like letting them great/shake hands to ease the tension”. He also said, “The program needs professional production and presentation”

4.3.4. Journalists should keep the news in proportion and make it comprehensive

“Keeping news in proportion is a cornerstone of truthfulness. Inflating events for sensation, neglecting others, stereotyping, or being disproportionately negative all make a less reliable map. The most comprehensive maps include all affected communities, not just those with attractive demographics. The most complete stories take into account diverse backgrounds and perspectives”. (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007)

Yeketemoch Mederek program is being held in towns alone. All respondents and some participants of the symposium, however, agreed on the need for holding the forums down in the rural parts of the region where critical governance-related problems exist. A representative of Unity for Democracy and Justice supports this idea reminding about 80 percent of the population live in rural parts of Amhara region.

In terms of coverage, there are areas of the region where there is limited or no coverage of the media transmission. A representative from Sekota indicates that there are areas where there is no coverage of the media.

4.4. The perception of audiences to the program in its relevance for the promotion of good governance

The survey study conducted by AMMA's Media Development and Plan Preparation Directorate shows that the majority (81.4%) of respondents agree that discussing the problems of the area via mass media contributes to the development of that area.

There is a high demand on the side of the society. The media has a hotline number (8200) by which the audiences forward their comments. Most of the comments are appreciations. Many audiences request the media to organize the forum in their town. Residents of Mekane Selam and Merawi have gone far, even up to signing petition, to invite the media. This indicates how the society is in need of a means to express their problems and discuss with their leaders.

Many people of the region love the media especially Yeketemoch Mederek program. The researcher observed when many people share their posts on social media.

It is a big thing to have such positive image especially in this time of political tension. Journalist II said this is because the society gets their comments aired live without editorial influence. Journalist IV also said the media could be respected by the society only if it works for them.

“When we go to different towns for any reason people, looking at our logo posted on our car, people will gather and tell us we have let their problems be heard. They request us to come again as there are other untold problems too. They see us as a judge. Credibility has a huge place in media and our media is achieving it”.

There are also few administrators such as in Alem town who invited the media to hold the forum. Now some officials who opposed the forum started to urge the media hold the forum because they can escalate the problems which are beyond their capacity.

Due to Yeketemoch Mederek program, the media's viewership and readership are increasing. For example, Journalist V claims, the readership of Bekur newspaper has increased since the beginning 'Fit Lefit' column. He said, "Unlike the old time people from different area call us and ask where they could find the newspaper". This gives a clue that the readers are increasing.

4.5. The perceived effectiveness of the program

4.5.1. Strength of the program and perceived achievements

In the symposium, a lecturer in the school of Journalism at Addis Ababa University summarized the strength of the program as follows: "Presenting real and direct opinions of the society, having no partiality, conducting mini research ahead of the discussion, airing follow up story, protecting sources of information by going again and asking the wellbeing of speakers...." This is what most of the participants in the symposium agreed.

Having a ground rule for the discussion is one of the strengths of the program because it enables the facilitators to control the discussion properly. The other strength the researcher observed is the positive feeling in journalists. They said they do their work with passion and are proud of their job and the media. A representative of one opposition party said, "I attended the forum held in Gondar without disclosing myself. I appreciated the journalists who were disciplined and led the discussion properly. Unlike other journalists of our nation who are usually accused of favoring the government, they tried to be a voice for the society. I found Yeketemoch Mederek program different from others". A lecturer in the school of Journalism at AAU applauded the journalists in the symposium saying "The moderators are wise, alert and with the ability to lead discussions". Participant II also expressed his appreciation of the facilitator's skill of leading the forum by controlling the discussion when attendants make noise supporting and opposing speakers.

Trying to be a mouthpiece of the society is what is most appreciated by many. Most participant interviewees and other participants of the symposium echoed the unorthodox work of the media,

especially in Yeketemoch Mederek program. That is letting the voices of the society be heard louder than any other times being a state-owned media of our nation which, according to some opposition party representatives, are usually criticized for siding with the government and being its mouthpiece.

Participant III said, “Though no significant change is seen in Woreta town after the forum, I know that this forum has brought many changes in other towns. It served as an instrument to solve problems of many towns”. The researcher checked the progress scored in many towns and discussed them separately in the coming topics.

All journalists and participants told the researcher that positive changes, both in personal and town level, are witnessed because of the forum. In some places, the administrators were reformed. According to journalist II, “There were officials who resigned from their power after the forum. For example in Bati, the vice mayor had resigned immediately after the forum”.

Participant II said, “In Woreta, the movement for change from the administrators’ side started since the first day they learned the coming of the media. For instance, the construction of pedestrian lane has shown some progress after the forum. The same progress is seen in Koble stone road construction. Some land related issues are also solved”.

Participant III also supports the above idea. “A week before the event, the city administration starting from the Kebele level was busy what to present and respond at the forum. Several meetings were held to fill their gaps. Had they performed what they did just before the event, so many problems would have been solved. I am sure if the media come again and organize an audit forum, many problems would be solved including the existing water shortage problem of our town”.

Talking about the major changes he witnessed journalist II said, “In most towns, there was a problem of roads that connect villages to villages, we have observed most towns are trying to solve them. In Bati and Haik, the interrupted construction of hospitals has started again. Bati’s technical and vocational school building was restarted, many land related problems and issues of service delivery quality were solved. We confirm this when we go for follow up and this is justified by the society”.

Many problems of individuals were solved after the forum. Journalist I told an example that happened in Kombolcha. “A woman, a mother of children whose father had passed away, expressed her grief metaphorically on the forum saying the administrators are like a hyena. Some individuals were to snatch her land by dealing illegally with the administrators. When we went back to make development stories, we found her problem solved”. This implied many other similar problems were solved.

Governance Lecture II said, “As a resident of Bahir Dar city, I observed changes in regional civil service. I saw experts of good governance structured in teams /directorates in different institutes. Unlike the old times, I was satisfied with their services. I saw a radical change in Felege Hiwot Hospital in Bahir Dar”. A representative from Alem town testified that they have seen tangible changes. “Many problems were solved at the town level and some others were referred to higher officials”. Governance Lecture I also witnessed the progress he saw in Burie and Dangela towns.

To sum up, the perceived achievements of the media show include: administrators have started to be aware of the power of media, service delivery quality is improving and accountability spirit and discussion culture has developed between the two entities- the society and governors, many problems, both personal and group, are solved as a result of the forum etc.

4.5.2. Weakness of the program and perceived failures

In the programs, the researcher reviewed most of the issues raised are comments on the leaders. Only problems of the administrators are the focus of the discussions. A representative of Zami FM said, “The discussion shall not focus only on keeping the governors responsible, but it should also discuss what is expected from the society. To let them examine themselves and make them part or owner of the development activities”.

Yeketemoch Mederek program has no fixed time of transmission both on TV and radio. The radio program is transmitted live on the day when the forum is held and the TV program is aired by allocating some time that will be announced to let viewers wait for the program. Among the interviewees, a journalism and communication lecturer I suggested, “The forums shall be held

consistently and the program shall have a fixed time of transmission, be once or twice a week, taking care of not running out of backlog”.

The issue of setting an agenda for the discussion was one of the issues in the symposium. A representative from North Shewa Zone criticized the discussion for lacking focus area while trying to touch many topics and being unable to do one with a best of it. He suggested discussing specific agenda like good governance alone or water problem of the town etc. A representative from Maya Show supported this idea “Issues shall be identified and agendas shall be selected for discussion. For instance, power distribution is a problem for many of the cities all over the nation that the Agency itself admitted. Thus, participants shall not waste their time talking about power related issues by neglecting other hidden problems of towns”. Participant III suggested, “The facilitators could shape the agenda by dividing the time and stop when participants raise similar/related issues and give the chance to others”.

Most other participants of the symposium strongly opposed the selection of topics for discussion. But ‘whose agenda is being articulated?’ is also another issue. Is the problem of the majority being voiced? There are some people who have a problem but could not articulate it. Only those people who can express their idea could be heard and the agenda would be on their issues. The media shall be careful of setting the real agenda by digging out the real problem of the majority. So research and assessment should be made to find deep untold problems. The researcher observed some individuals write their idea on a piece of paper and pass it to the moderator.

A journalism and communication lecturer in AAU and a representing of the private sector critic the program for it lacks giving criticisms. “The program is just presenting the problem of the society in different media. It fails to give analysis, interpretations, and comments to the problems. As to them, the media shall invite experts to give analysis on the mentioned issues and suggest the possible solutions”.

Participant III said, “The follow up was made too late so that the administrators’ motivation has declined. Had they tried to make follow up stories soon after the forum when the administrators were motivated, many problems would have been solved”. Participant I also supports the idea saying, “Even when the journalists came for follow-up, they had to let us sit together with our governors and discuss face to face again”.

Only men led all the discussions of the third episode, even most development stories were made by male journalists. There seems to have men domination in the production of the program.

Regarding the perceived failures of the program, though responsible bureaus such as human rights, anticorruption and ombudsmen and other regional bureaus are officially invited to attend the forums and take inputs, only ombudsman has a high number of attendees. All the respondents expressed their complaints about this issue. One of the journalists says “they are even supposed to own the program if not they could attend or at least follow the programs from where they are, rather than waiting for tips in their offices”.

All the media can do is publicize the issue and let others know the maladministration. Other ways, says journalist II, “We can neither imprison nor punish, but the institutions which have legal right to do so can take their own measure. In some places, because they speak on the stage some individuals were arrested based on other excuses, in revenge”. The researcher heard this complaint from many of the participants and journalists also told the researcher that they heard similar cases in many towns, but they fail to dig the truth and argue to get the imprisoned free. An opposition party representative asserted this in the symposium. As to him, “Soon after the forum which was held in Gondar, few people who spoke on the discussion faced different challenges and the party had reported to the concerned body condemning the action”. Journalist III said, in another town, they went to the regional level to ask them release the person imprisoned for speaking on the forum. But the researcher was not sure about the final result. Since it is the media that encourages the society to speak freely, they also have to fight the negative consequence that would happen as a result of their speech.

Water, electric power supply, road, and other infrastructural problems are not yet solved in many towns. Of course, some problems need a long time to solve them. And some others are beyond the capacity of the woredas and even the region.

There are some officials who faced strong opposition from the society, but still clinging onto power. Governance and Development Lecturer II told the researcher, “An administrator in Mota town was given an even better position when the society criticized him in the forum. This is what annoys the society most”.

Araia stated the need for structural changes in his article ‘The Contradiction between Good Governance and the Developmental State in Ethiopia’:-

“Town meetings on good governance have been taking place in the last three to four years in all major Ethiopian cities and towns, and now it is intensified at the level of the regional states; it is a very encouraging political scenario, but as stated earlier, unless structural change takes place, the public discourse could end up in ordinary chattering platforms where people vent their anger only”. (Tigrai Online, 2016)

The forum has little room to discuss the solutions to raised issues. Most of the time, the mayor presents a brief report and much time will be given for the society to raise issues. Then the administrators will be given the chance to respond on each issue and to set a deadline for solving the issues raised and the discussion will be finalized. The researcher believes there should be enough time to discuss how the issues could be solved and how the society and the administrators could work together.

The atmosphere of the forum doesn’t look good. It is full of tension. It seems the administrators are there to be blamed. We rarely hear appreciations. It could be because there isn’t any, but it is recommended to start giving comments from a positive one. After all the administrators and the society live in the same town and will meet in different instances so the tension shall calm down before the end of the forum. One participant of the symposium suggested if there would be a means like to let both entities greet each other.

4.6. Opportunities and challenges in production of the programs

4.6.1. Challenges

At the beginning, many officials believed that the forum was intended to antagonize governors with the society. Therefore, some city administrators did not want the discussion to be held. Among the problems they created included planning concurrent meetings in the hall, the journalists planned to hold a forum at the same time, trying to organize their supporters and dominate the discussion, trying to cut off telephone/power services.

Some regional officials do not accept the invitation sent by the media with a belief that it is enough if zonal officials attend the forums. Journalist I thinks it could be because either fearing the confrontation with the society as they did little to be seen or giving little attention to the program.

The media has budget and material constraints such as transport vehicles, generator, speakers, and other materials used for stage decorates.

On the side of members of the society negative issues include arriving late, being emotional, abusive, losing tack of the objective of the discussion, being annoyed if they couldn't get the chance to speak, speaking without the will of the facilitator, raising issues out of the town's topic etc. Journalist I said, "Kebele members recruited their supporters who would accompany them and appreciate the administrators. They would occupy the hall arriving earlier than the rest of the society. Their intention is to dominate the forum by minimizing the chance of individuals who would speak against the administrators". The meeting culture of the society coupled with the day (most Christians of the area go to church on every Sunday morning) would help them to achieve their goal.

On the side of administrators: - rather than speaking to the point, some beat around the bush and that doesn't satisfy the society and they consume the time, they give vague answers, some are not willingness to attend the discussion. When journalists go for follow up, some officials try to prevent them from communicating with individuals who spoke on the forum.

Regarding cooperation to hold the discussion, the Communication Bureau head of the region admitted the existence of both willing and unwilling administrators. He hoped society would continue the fight to sustain the democratic forums.

The bureau head condemned the offices which are invited but usually do not attend the discussion. He however urged participants of the symposium to take one thing into consideration that is for example if education bureau could not attend due to different reasons; either the zone or the woreda education bureau- that is too close to the issue- shall attend.

The media cannot give coverage to those who expose wrong doings on the forum. Journalists' guardian is truth. Some people claim they faced problems after they speak on the forum. One of

the journalists also believes that might happen and he remembered news aired stating the complaint of the people who faced problems because they speak on the forum. Journalist II on the other hand says, we just sense these cases but do not include them in our report because we can't find strong evidence to show. A participant of the symposium said she is one of the victims who are being mistreated for exposing maladministration.

According to journalist IV, "short time is given by the media- due to lack of material and human resource- only a half day is given to make the report, but some issues need much investigation to dig the truth and to make a balanced story".

4.6.2. Opportunities

The goodwill of the higher officials including the regional administration to let the society speak up their burdens is the major opportunity. As many of the participants of the symposium agreed, the program would have not existed without the goodwill and support of the regional government.

The regional government allows the program to continue despite different challenges from worded areas and zones. Moreover, the higher officials of the region use the program as an input. According to the regional communication Bureau, "The government is helping, devoting a special attention, by halting any constraints for success of Yeketemoch Mederek. If there are leaders who are not ready for the discussion a major corrective measure is taken to bring them to the track".

Sometimes when there is some critical issue, the higher officials go to the place before even having their lunch. If the case can be solved, they would give direction at that time.

The societies' active participation and free expression of their opinion are also opportunities. Journalist IV said, the society tells us everything, which they would not tell us in other times.

Determination of the media management to take risks especially by transmitting live on the radio and journalists' dedication to achieve goals of the program are also opportunities. Journalist IV relates the skills of journalists with their educational qualification. As to him, some are pursuing their Master's degree and most of them are BA degree holders in journalism and

communications, but previously the media used to give chances to anyone from the social science stream.

4.7. Skepticism about the program

The researcher doubts about the continuity of the program. One of the factors that could be a challenge for the program is influence from the government. The program is being held with a goodwill and support of the regional government. In addition, if the program continues with this pace exposing maladministration and mal administrators, the public will gradually start to accuse the higher officials who are not discharging their responsibility properly. A representative from Sekota said, “There was a program called ‘*Ayinachin*’ which is not on air now for a reason I am not sure. I fear Yeketemoch Mederek program will have the same fate”.

Financial problem could also be a bottleneck for the program. Usually it is hard to find sponsors for such programs with less/no entertainment values. One participant of the symposium argues, “It is better to spend money on this program because it can help democracy to flourish. Getting people who speak their mind in front of the camera is a big thing”.

The other problem could be if no cover is given for those who speak on the forum. The study conducted by the media shows 54 percent of the respondents believe that those who speak on the forum would be blamed, threatened and intimidated after the report is aired. Participant III also said, “The people who gave comments are afraid of being avenged by the governors for disclosing or speaking up the truth”.

Most participants of the symposium expressed their concern that the atmosphere doesn’t look for mutual benefit of both the governors and the society. It is like a stage where only problems and criticisms of the administrators are exposed.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides the summary and conclusion of the study followed by some possible recommendations.

5.1. Summary

Yeketemoch Mederek is a radio and TV program of AMMA produced based on the forum held between city administrators and the society. The program started to be aired since 2009 with the aim of helping to solve problems related to good governance in the region. The forum is held only in the towns of Amhara region in different episodes and is organized and chaired by journalists of the media. The first two episodes were held in the zonal towns alone.

Examining the contribution of the program to the development of good governance and democracy in the region is important but -to researcher's knowledge- no research has been conducted in the area. Hence, the main problem of this research is the existence of knowledge gap and this study is intended to fill that gap.

This study focused on Yeketemoch Mederek program on its act of organizing a forum for discussion in the third episode. In this episode, which started to be held in December 2016, the media organized the forum in 19 towns incorporating few non-zonal towns. This study also analyzed 'Yeketemoch Mederek' program in view of journalism principles, assessed the perception of audiences to the program in its relevance for the promotion of good governance, found out the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goal and identified the opportunities and challenges in production of the program.

The researcher randomly selected two towns and reviewed the transmitted programs. In addition to program content analysis, in-depth interview was conducted with 14 purposively selected key informants with the aim of obtaining detailed information on the issue and qualitative research method was employed. The key informants were five producers of Yeketemoch Mederek program, two scholars of media and communication, two scholars of governance and development, one scholar of political science and four participants of the forum. However, there were also other samples that the researcher decided to incorporate during the course of the study with a belief that the information gathered was not adequate to advance the study and for the

sake of verifying the findings. Moreover, the researcher took inputs from a symposium organized to discuss Yeketemoch Medeek program.

The data obtained, from respondents and by reviewing the recorded programs, were organized and frameworks were identified based on the data. Descriptive method of data analysis was used while presenting the data. Social Responsibility Theory and The Public Sphere Theory were used to analyze the descriptions.

The program has three different production stages: preproduction, production and post-production in which each has its own activity. In the forum, issues related to lack of good governance, problems of infrastructure development, personal issues and land related issues are often raised. However, there seems maladministration problem behind most problems raised.

The study revealed that the program is contributing its part to the promotion of good governance and democracy by adopting the principle of naming and shaming and serving as a bridge between the governors and the society. It also demonstrates these roles by alarming local leaders to be accountable added to creating a platform for the exercise of democracy and creation of awareness.

As the findings indicate, regional government supports the program with a belief that it could contribute to the promotion of democracy and good governance in the region. The finding also revealed that even though many positive changes were attained as a result of the forum, there are still towns of the region where no significant change was observed.

The strength of the program lies in its effort of conducting mini research ahead of the discussion, making follow up stories and being able to manage the discussions properly. On the other hand, an assessment on the weaknesses of the program showed that the program focusing on comments and criticisms against the administrators by giving little emphasis on what is expected from the society. It also fails to give analysis, interpretations, and comments to the problems raised in the forums. Moreover, having no fixed time of transmission on both TV and radio is also the other weakness.

Based on the findings, the researcher suggested the program to have a fixed time of transmission. Producers of the program shall also invite experts to give analysis, interpretations and comments to the problems raised in the forums. Media policy makers shall design a policy that compels other media organizations of Ethiopia incorporate organizing forums as part of their principal duties. Participants of the forum also shall obey the ground rules and act accordingly.

5.2. Conclusions

This research attempted to examine how Yeketemoch Mederek program of AMMA is serving as a public forum primarily focusing on how the program is contributing to the promotion of good governance and democracy in Amhara regional State. In doing so, the researcher has used qualitative research method. In-depth interview was conducted with purposively selected key informants and records of forums held in two randomly selected towns were reviewed.

The study has revealed that the program is contributing its part to the promotion of good governance and democracy by adopting the principle of naming and shaming and serving as a bridge between the governors and the society. It also demonstrates this role by alarming local leaders to be accountable as well as creating a platform for the exercise of democracy and creation of awareness.

In the discussion where various parts of the society participate and active participation is witnessed, issues related with land, lack of good governance and problems of infrastructure development are most commonly raised. The respondents believe most problems of all kind are rooted in lack of good governance. Quite often, criticisms are forwarded against the administrators while rare appreciations of good doers and only few comments on the responsibilities of the society are articulated.

As the findings indicate, the program is held with the goodwill and support of the regional government. The governors in higher position of the region give due emphasis to the program. They believe the program could contribute to the prevalence of democracy and good governance in the region. They follow the programs and take inputs for further actions/measurements.

The program seems to become popular in the resident of the region. Though many changes are brought as a result of the forum, there are also areas where no significant change is seen.

The research indicates that being voice to the society, conducting mini research ahead of the discussion, making follow up story and being able to manage the discussion properly are among the strengths of the program. On the other hand, the finding critic the program- among others- for not having a fixed time of transmission on both TV and radio, focusing on comments and criticisms against the administrators by giving little emphasis on what is expected from the

society, falling to give analysis, interpretations and comments to the problems raised in the forums.

With regard to principles of journalism, through Yeketemoch Mederek program the media is discharging its responsibility of providing forums for public criticism and comment. Since the program is aired live to audiences, defamation is found out to be a threat so the principle of ‘the essence of journalism is a discipline of verification’ is put under a question mark. The other principle the program lacks is making the significant both interesting and relevant. The program doesn’t look a discussion for a common goal. Leave alone entertaining, most forums are like a debating scene between the society and their leaders. In terms of keeping the program in proportion and making it comprehensive, the forums are held only in towns but majority of the population of Amhara region live in rural areas.

The finding reveals among the challenges that the producers of Yeketemoch Mederek face are: some administrators do not want the forum to be held, some regional bureaus do not accept the invitation sent by the media to attend in the forum, the media lacks materials and human resource, some participants disrespect the ground rules of the discussion etc.

Goodwill and support of the higher officials of the region, the societies’ active participation, determination of the media management to take risks especially by transmitting live on the radio and journalists’ dedication are found out to be among the opportunities that helped producers of the program to achieve their goals.

Generally speaking, the finding suggests that AMMA is discharging its responsibilities of organizing public forum through Yeketemoch Mederek program and the program is contributing its part to the development of democracy and good governance in Amhara region.

5.3. Recommendations

Below are recommendations suggested based on the findings.

- The media shall hold the discussion regularly and the program shall have a fixed time of transmission

- The regional government shall force regional bureaus to accept the invitation sent by the media. Especially the ombudsman, the human rights and anticorruption bureaus shall take the leading in supporting the program
- The above three bureaus shall also take input from the forums and take the necessary measure undertaking further investigation.
- The regional government shall remove mal administrators whom the society exposed in the forum and take real corrective measures rather than reappointing them to other places for an equal or a better position.
- Facilitators shall save sometime at the end that will be used to discuss solutions alone and to make the society part of the solution.
- Facilitators shall use mechanisms to ease the tension created during the discussion. It could be letting them great each other.
- While airing the program, producers shall invite experts to give analysis, interpretations and comments to the problems raised in the forums.
- Based on the result gained in the mini research, the moderators shall introduce the major well-known problems of a city before the participants start to speak. This will help to get new ideas by saving the time that would be used to speak those problems.
- Participants shall obey the ground rules and act accordingly
- Rather than mere criticism, participants shall develop the habit of expressing appreciation to those who deserve to.
- In order to minimize the risk of defamation and other risks of live transmission, producers shall use *technical delay*.
- Media policy makers shall design a policy, which enforce other media organizations to incorporate organizing forums as their principal duty.

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APPENDIXS

Appendix A

In-depth interview guide for Producers of Yeketemoch Mederek Program

- How do you organize the forum?
- What is the selection criteria of participants, time & place of the forum?
- What are the activities done in pre and post forum periods?
- What are the issues most commonly raised?
- What are the roles of participants, government officials and facilitators in the forum?
- What is the criteria to select up sounds for broadcast/publication?
- What are the challenges and opportunities you face while organizing the forums producing the programs?

Appendix B

In-depth interview guide for Media and Communication Scholars

- What are the responsibilities of media houses?
- What is the contribution of such programs for the promotion of good governance and democracy?
- What are the strong and weak sides of the program in view of journalism practice?
- What is the advantage and disadvantage of transmitting the program live on the radio?

Appendix C

In-depth interview guide for Political Science and Governance and Development Scholars

- What is the relationship between media and democracy/good governance?
- What is the contribution of such programs for the promotion of good governance and democracy?

Appendix D

In-depth interview guide for Participants of the Forum

- What was your perception of the program before and after the forum is held in your town?
- How do you see the role of the program for promotion of good governance in your area?
- Tell me the overall atmosphere when the form was held in your town?
- What kinds of issues are raised on the forum?
- Were there any important issues rise in the forum and that you think should be transmitted, but omitted while airing on TV?