ACİL DURUMLAR ALTINDA VB. YAPILAN YURTTAŞ GEZETECİLİĞİNİN ETİYOPYA’DAKİ TERÖRLE MÜCADELEYLE BAĞLANTISI:
ÇIKARILAN DERSLER VE BEKLENTİLER

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Özet

Anahtar Kelimeler: Facebook, Alt Alan ve Aktörler, Yurttaş Gazeteciliği

CITIZEN JOURNALISM UNDER THE STATE OF EMERGENCY VS ANTI-TERRORISM PROCLAMATION NEXUS IN ETHIOPIA: COURSES AND PROSPECTS

Abstract
This research sought to demonstrate the courses and prospects of social media particularly Facebook as an alternate Subaltern space and citizen journalism as a counter-hegemonic practice appeared during Oromo and Amhara protests and under the state of emergency in Ethiopia. To achieving its objectives, the research has employed qualitative research technique and citizen journalism as a Subaltern space as a theoretical framework. Based on the idea that Subalternism infers revolution and fighting power from below through forms of communication in the aim of mobilizing and advocating ideologies of liberation and freedom from oppression, the research has then selected four sample cases where Subaltern spaces have used extensively. The analysis and discussion indicate that Facebook for the first time has used as Subaltern space extensively, to bring socio-political change in the history of Ethiopia. Accordingly, this form of Subaltern space would become in jeopardy under the State of Emergency as it has witnessed in the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, and the actor (citizen journalists) will not have an opportunity to practice their power.

Key Words: Facebook, Subaltern Space and Actors, Citizen Journalism

1. Introduction
Citizen Journalism in Ethiopia has not been practiced well until the end of the first decade of the 21st century. It is a current phenomenon struggling to bring change in the socio-political sphere of Ethiopia. Its influence to bring change or practiced thoroughly depends on social, cultural and political factors. There can be barriers that hinge it not
to be pragmatic. These restrictions are not just political but also may be technological, cultural and economic. Technologically mean that people should be up to date with new media technologies to executing citizen journalism efficiently. So that in this regard, illiteracy rate matters. On the other hand, the relevant indicator of the political and cultural setting is the legal framework, the level of transparency in the public administration, the functioning of civil society, the application of informal control, and the media (Skjerdal, 2014).

Likewise, Allen (2009) argues that citizen journalism is hard to defining as a result of the above reasons. He contends that the definitions are social, historically and politically contingent. Allen’s argument on the danger of a singular and linear characterization of citizen journalism is not only revealing, but also underscores three major points about what appears to be the main cross-cutting elements in the crystallization of this nascent practice in different spaces and places. Those are: (a) that it is often associated with narratives of the ordinary people, (b) it is usually associated with crises, be it social, political, or even environmental, (c) it is shaped by the history and society in which it obtains.

Congruently, Atton (2002) asserts that citizen journalism is a set of practice embedded within the everyday lives of citizens. As the concern of this study as well, citizen journalism seems to capture something of a countervailing ethos of ordinary person capacity to bear witness, especially during a social or political crisis (Allen, 2009). Things to note that here are the political factors may hinder the citizen journalism not to practice well. Accordingly, bearing this in mind, this study demonstrates the courses of citizen journalism as a Subaltern space in Ethiopia whereby it strives to bring change in the political domains, what circumstances turns it up, what results does that bring, and the challenges interfaced during the courses as well. This study rounds up on the declared state of emergency in Ethiopia on 15 October 2016, to discussing the outlined questions. The State of Emergency declared after a year of intensive protests raised against the government in Amhara and Oromo region of Ethiopia which is in fact boiled using new media technology along the lines of citizen engagement. The public especially the youngsters have been experiencing and or engaging via Facebook to discuss issues, informing their local communities on the political going of the country like maladministration, inequality, justice.

The protester called for many demonstrations as if the call to use their subaltern space which it will be discussed later in the theoretical frameworks, throughout the country via Facebook whereby it is considered by many that an effective means of communication in erupting those protests (a potent way of practicing Subaltern space). The emergence of this new media technology helped the public to practice their freedom in which it is a medium of communication that allows them (the ordinary people) to share information on what is happening in their communities, post video of brutal attack of police and intimidation during the demonstration. That means they have functioned as a citizen journalist that are common citizens that take the initiative to report news and express views regarding what’s happenings in their community (Ross & Cormier, 2010). Likewise, just as Abraham Lincoln definition of democracy a government of the people, by the people and for the people, in the same manner, this researcher as well describes citizen journalism as information of the people, by the people and for the people. The protest proves that public shifts from mainstream media to new media technologies whereby it considers as a Subaltern space for those sorts of democratic participation have resulted from long-term grievances on the Ethiopian government regulation to impede public engagement via media in a movement for political change. Thus to demonstrating this, I the researcher shall discuss the aspects of Ethiopian mainstream media.
2. Aspects of Mainstream Media in Ethiopia

After coming into power in 1991 different measures have taken to liberalizing the media sector by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). However, especially the mainstream media remains controlled by the government. All television stations and most radio stations particularly are state owned. The measures were taken from 2008 onwards has decentralized the broadcasting structures of Ethiopia to regional mass media agencies in which Oromia Radio & Television Agency is the biggest one from among Regional state media. The decentralization efforts have led them to broadcast by their local language, significantly expand media infrastructures and increase the number of journalists throughout the country. Currently, there is state organized five televisions and radio station. And five private radio stations all of them in urban. Community radios as well are flourishing, but they are still in an infant stage as if they broadcast only one to two hours in a day.

As compared to broadcast media print media is much more liberalized where private channel outnumbered the state-owned ones. As the report shows off almost 20 newspaper titles, four are government controlled, and the rest are private though they have encountered establishments and closing sometimes by the government which put the press freedom in jeopardy. The rate of circulation is minimum as well as it is only distributed in the urban area mainly in the capital Addis Ababa. The use of the internet as a news medium, on the other hand, is firmly rising. However, it faces shut down from the government for instance during those protests.

Regarding media freedom, Ethiopian government often criticized of accusing independent press as it has observed assaults on journalists and media surveillance. The pragmatic aspect of free journalism in Ethiopia is very low, principally though is the finest one as the press law guarantees press freedom, for instance in the article 29 of the 1995 Ethiopian constitution states (1) Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference, (2) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without any 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 media of his choice, and (3) Freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed. Freedom of the press shall specifically include the prohibition of any form of censorship and access to information of public interest.

Further, in principle, the new media law in 2008 has marked a significant advancement for the press in many different spheres such as Pre-trial detention of journalists was prohibited; licensing of newspapers ended; professional association became a legal right; and Ethiopia became one of the first countries in Africa to pass legislation securing access to government information. With the new law, media legislation was no longer an effective tool to persecute journalists, as had been the case with the repealed 1992 press law until 2008 (Skjerdal, 2014).

Nevertheless, this law followed by a highly controversial law; the 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation that inhibits the integrity of independent journalism whereby it has initiated in the name of preventing and fighting terrorism. But the law, in fact, is against critical reporting/writing and freedom of speech. The law has enacted to stifle political opposition and freedom of expression (Gordon, Sullivan & Mittal, 2015). It grants the government authorities a right to interpret what forms provocation and comfort for terrorism. For example, the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, No. 652/2009 clause 5 specifies that “whosoever publishes or causes the publication of a statement that is likely to be understood by some or all of the members of the public [...] as a direct or indirect encouragement [...] of an act of terrorism [...] is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from 10 to 20 years.”
The established Anti-Terrorism Proclamation consequently are caused to imprison many journalists, bolster self-censorship and what’s more the closing of several presses and media outlets. Eskinder Nega and Riyot Alemu, and Zone Nine Bloggers are from among the prominent prosecuted journalists. Therefore, what these aspects of Ethiopian mainstream media experiences lead the Ethiopian media consumers relates to the very question of this research. This research has hypothesized this accordingly that the audiences look to some other opportunities for their consumption of information such as alternative media (citizen journalism) so that they, in turn, struggle to change this status quo.

3. Theoretical Framework
3.1 Citizen Journalism as a Subaltern Space and Practice
The researcher believes that a theory of citizen journalism as an alternate subaltern space and practice would help this research to discuss the courses of Ethiopian citizen journalism which brought an intensive impact on the contemporary Ethiopian polity as it has cause erupting protests in the Amhara and Oromia region of Ethiopia. Citizen Journalism is a means of discursive space and practices for ordinary people whereby it allows them to engage in it accordingly which they cannot cherish it in the mainstream media. It is also a decisive factor to combat the mainstream media (in the case of Ethiopia) that often helps advance the interests of the government.

Given the nature of Ethiopian mainstream media as stated earlier too, citizen journalism is likely to happen autonomously as a voice of the subaltern. It digs some sorts of free path and participation by everyday people, provides a space for the divergence of opinion and freedom, and most importantly is independent of any form of power that might abridge free speech such as Anti-Terrorism Proclamation mentioned above. In this manner, citizen journalism plays a contributing factor as a power of democratization and civic engagement in a situation like Ethiopia. Thus, theoretically, subaltern spaces shall be a place whereby the features of freedom entertained, for instance, free speech and expression, reporting, debate, direct participation, resistance to power and domination. These are the very value of human freedom, social justice, and equity contrary to censorship, systemic oppression, and exploitation.

Citizen journalism is a prerequisite to subaltern. It is important to understand the very issues of the subaltern. As Louai, (2011) explains the subaltern is the oppressed people who lack a voice in the mainstream public spheres, and the basic right of participation in the making of local history, and culture. Subaltern comprises groups considered as marginalized in class, race, gender, and backgrounds either politically, economically or socially. Similarly, they do not have the opportunity in developing their culture and history. They constructed as the incomprehensible other in the mainstream media space as if they lack control of self-i.e. their culture and history. Subaltern spaces and practices can be conceptualized in terms of their counter-hegemonic and social change and political transformation agenda in a society that is often expressed in news values that embrace political or cultural radicalism (Atton, 2002; Bailey et al., 2008). They are commonly spaces and practices of freedom for ordinary people, and regularly embody ideologies of the underdog that seldom form part of the discourse in the mainstream media.

As Papacharisi (2010) note subaltern space represent forms of citizenship that are both monitory and participative. They are assumed to be a platform for active citizenship that is discursive, critical, and transformative. Citizenship signifies a devotion toward the public good in the political pieces of stuff. It is a set of civic attitudes, an emblem of civic participation, an arena where right bearers unfold their personalities and responsibilities (Colas, 1993). Subaltern spaces, therefore, provide opportunities for ordinary citizens for democratic citizenship, political engagement, and social action.
Additionally, subaltern spaces can also be structured to serve grassroots communities that experience a common condition of domination, and subordination. Here we can take social and/or online media as one kind of space. This brings communities that transcend the limits time, space to potentially make them democratically inclusive. Though such communities are disparate, translocate, DE territorialized, and mediated, they are bound by sharing a common condition or problem from which they seek freedom (Popple, 1995). Subalternism therefore infers revolution and fighting power from below through forms of communication in the aim of mobilizing and advocating ideologies of liberation and freedom from oppression. Thus, to achieve these goals new media technologies like using social networks is decisive in advancing subaltern interests and the creation of spaces that allow the subaltern to speak.

One of the important factors underpinning community service in subaltern spaces is participation, particularly the one created from below (Waltz, 2005). Subaltern media spaces organized primarily to enable wider social participation in the creation, production, and dissemination of content than is possible in the mass media (Atton, 2002:25). This implies ordinary people’s free involvement in producing stories and mediating their social experiences through alternative new media technologies. Regarding this, Bailey argue states that participation in the media and through the media sees the communicative process not as a series of practices that are often restrictively controlled by media professionals, but as a human right that cuts across societies (2008). Participation is not only a human right. It is a means to an end or social action by the subaltern (Hamelink & Hoffmann, 2008).

Thus, citizen journalism as a form of subaltern space and practice has been referred to as ‘participatory journalism’, ‘citizen-generated media’, ‘we media’, ‘grassroots media’, ‘self-service media’ so as to emphasize the notions of inclusion and participatory communication that are often embedded in alternative media spaces (Gillmor, 2006). However, participation in subaltern spaces and practices must not be perceived as structureless as power relations still exist and remain influence who says what, where, when, and why. To that degree, it is important to note citizen journalism as a spatial practice formed in many ways by technological and social contexts of actors.

Subaltern spaces shall be independent of the state and any form of authority or power. As Bailey (2008) state that as well citizen journalism as one such space, for example, must enjoy institutional autonomy and editorial independence from both the state and market forces so as to allow subordinated groups to produce non-conformist and sometimes counter-hegemonic representations of the views of those marginalised, misrepresented, and underrepresented in the public sphere. Autonomy from the state or market forces implies that citizen journalism practices should be more amenable to civil society especially as a sphere of public life beyond the control of the state (Colas, 2002). It serves as a buffer zone strong enough to keep both state and market from being too powerful and dominating (Giddens, 2001). Accordingly, then civil society is the infrastructure which has needed for the spread of democracy (Anheier, 2003).

And so forth, citizen journalism is a more meaningful practice of freedom as if embedded on social movements. As opposed to civil society, social movements are far less hierarchical and can be described as informal, grassroots, or community-based networks that provide ideal spaces for the subaltern agency (McAdam, 1996). Therefore, citizen journalism and social movement as a subaltern space play a substantial role in building democracy. For achieving this, de-institutionalisation and DE professionalization of journalism are vital to creating a form of journalism that is free from newsroom monopolies and professional filtering, especially when the mainstream media is only serving as the mouthpiece of the authorities.
4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Trace of Subaltern Space during the Major Protests

To critically demonstrate what citizen journalism appeared under the state of emergency in Ethiopia and its prospects it is considerable to have a background account regarding the courses of protests boiled by social media especially Facebook. There have been two major protests in the two dominant regions of Ethiopia, Amhara and Oromo. It has been almost continuous since November 2015 until the declaration of the state of emergency on 15 October 2016. The protests in Oromia region were initially triggered by plans to extend the capital, Addis Ababa, into Oromia, but then have since evolved to other demands. Protests in the Amhara region began using their Subaltern space in August 2016 against arbitrary detention and calling for self-determination. The Ethiopian security forces have consistently used excessive, including lethal force, to desperate the protests. According to reports of Amnesty International hundreds of people have been killed from both sides of the protests. Hundreds of political activists, blogger, human right defenders, protesters who are in fact citizen journalists have arrested. At least 200 have charged under the Anti-Terrorism proclamation (Amnesty International).

During this protests, social media especially Facebook has played (i.e. as a Subaltern space) a decisive role to extend the agenda of the protests to their local community. Facebook has attained a position as an alternative platform in Ethiopia where the public can discuss a wide range of issues, including political controversy (Tesfaye, 2013). They have post information, share videos showing hundreds of thousands of the participant on the demonstration and showing a gesture of oppression and repression in the hope of gaining ground from the grassroots ordinary rural people and the international community as well. The protests have further exacerbated by Ethiopian diasporas such as by Jawar Mohammed, Executive Director of Oromia Media Network who based in Minnesota US among the prominent one and played a huge role to make the issue have international voices through his Twitter, Facebook. He called for the whole Oromo people to stand against the government. Consequently, the protest has become region-wide and gained international media coverage from Al Jazeera, BBC, and CNN. Let’s see the courses of Oromo protests first as if how it triggered by the social media.

As the researcher described the turning point of the Oromo protests was the Proposed Addis Ababa City Integrated Mater Plan, as claimed that the Master Plan would excise land from Oromia and cause forced eviction of Oromo farmers. Following this, the protesters since evolved to demand the release of Oromo political prisoners, equality on ethnic backgrounds and accountability for human rights violations. The Anti-Terrorism Proclamation Legislation which argued by many as that the government uses it to silent the political opposition, some private newspapers, bloggers, and activists have enacted during the protests. And the government arrested and charged Bekele Gerba, Deputy Chairperson of Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), Dejene Tafa, Deputy General Secretary of OFC, and others under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. These were the first instance where citizen journalists get their Subaltern space to protest against the government.

The Second instance that has helped protesters as an opportunity to exercise their Subaltern space was when Feyissa Lilesa, an ethnic Oromo Marathon runner, crossed his wrists above his head in an X, a gesture that came to define the Oromo protests, as he crossed the finishing line at the Rio Olympics to win the silver medal. The news brought the Oromo protest to an international arena as it got the coverage of many international media outlets. In an interview with The Guardian Lilesa have said "it is a very dangerous situation in Ethiopia nowadays, I show the gesture to stand against my sisters and brothers of Oromo, if I go back now, they will kill me. May I stay here, I have not another visa. If I
get a visa, I want to go to America.” As a result of this, the Oromo protest moved from the periphery of Ethiopia’s political discourse to the centre. Likewise, it brings the protests into the global public conscious via Lilesa’s expression of solidarity. Consequently, this suddenly tended the protesters to change their Facebook profile by Lilesa’s gesture, admiring him as a hero on their page which is a sign of using Subaltern space to extending the issues reach into the local communities.

Another instance where Subaltern space heavily exercised was during the tragedy that took place on 2 October 2016 in Bishoftu during the celebration of Irrecha which left many protesters to death. The death protesters during Irrecha was reportedly due to the disproportionate and unnecessary use of power by the security forces. In here as well the Facebook plays a huge role in manifesting the intensity of the protest by sharing video and photo of the dead bodies and the action of the soldier during the protests. The government position, which denies any role of security forces in using the stampede and instead places the blame on anti-peace elements which shows the response of the government to the Subaltern space. The Subaltern spaces widely distributed, and as some reports show to more than 476 mass incidents (protests) in almost all areas of the Regional State of Oromia (Ethiopia Human Right Project). The government has then followed detaining tens of thousands of protesters, activists, journalists to suppressing the subaltern spaces.

The other protest escalated the enactment of Subaltern space was in Amhara region of Ethiopia. The protests joined by many Amhara cities such as Gonder, Debre Tabor, Bahir Dar, Debre Markos and others at the end of July 2016 against the arbitrary arrest of Wolkait Amhara Identity and Self-determination Committee members. The committee has established to practice Subaltern space i.e. tasked with facilitating the exercise of the Wolkait Community’s right to self-determination. A big peaceful demonstration reportedly involving tens of thousands people then hosted in Gonder on 31 July 2016. Subsequently, a lot of protests has dispersed to some other Amhara regional cities. According to Amnesty International reports the security force arrested many protesters and arbitrarily detained them in unofficial places of detention, including in military and police training bases in which this can be a force to prohibit the use of Subaltern spaces by ordinary people (or citizen journalists).

Therefore, this research demonstrates that the government deems suppressing the Subaltern space by using forces to both protests boiled by new media technologies. What’s more the government announced a country-wide six-month state of emergency claiming that it is crucial in response to the threat posed by “anti-peace groups in close collaboration with foreign elements.” The government also contend that the state of emergency is needed to put an end to the damage that is being carried out against infrastructure projects, health centres, and administration and justice buildings. However, damaging of a property is a crime under Ethiopia’s criminal law, and the authorities could prosecute such acts without invoking a state of emergency (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

4.2 Prospects of Subaltern Space Under State of Emergency

Following the two protests, the government reportedly blocked mobile data and phone services which were a means adopted by the protesters to enhancing their Subaltern space. Further, the government arrested the decisive actors of the Subaltern spaces. As the report shows by Amnesty International, for instance, Natnael Feleke Zone-9 Bloggers and some members of the Semayawi opposition political Party Blen Mesfin, Eyosped Tesfaye and Tena Yitnaw, Abebe Akalu and Aweke Tezera. Then the government declared a country-wide State of Emergency on October 5, 2009 (Ethiopian Calendar) and 15 October 2016 (Gregorian Calender) which includes four section and 31 articles approved by
Ethiopian parliament. The directives of the state of emergency have raised concerns by the human right watch as if it threatens rights to free expression, assembly, and association and also encourage violations of the rights to the security of the person, including arbitrary detention (Human Right Watch). What’s more, as the focus of this research as well, it disrupts the Subaltern spaces outlined in the theoretical frameworks. Thus, to demonstrating the courses and prospects of Subaltern space that the protester used shifting from the mainstream media to their way of bringing political change in the country, the researcher considers that pointing those directives is important. Here as follows the violation of Subaltern space by the State of Emergency Directives.

The first one is restrictions on freedom of expression which makes access to information difficult as the directive restricts the writing or sharing of material on social media, radio, television or internet or any other communication channels that claimed to create violence, unrest or conflict among people likewise create misunderstanding between people or unrest. In this category, the government prohibits access to diaspora television stations and other “similar linked terrorist media” US-based Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) and Oromia Media Network (OMN) are named. And it enables the government to censor and block radio and television. It also prevents political parties from speaking to local or foreign media that has the potential to disrupt “the security, sovereignty and the constitutional order.”

This directive clearly shows the violation of subaltern space whereby the features of freedom entertained, for instance, free speech and expression, reporting, debate, direct participation, resistance to power and domination was reflected. During the protests, they cherished this freedom to resisting, opposing the wrongdoing of the government in their social media platform like Facebook which played an influential role in the dissemination of information throughout the protests, particularly among subaltern youngsters. They used to share information, what’s going on regarding the protests with those banned diaspora television station. As stated earlier on the trace of the mainstream media in Ethiopia as well the Ethiopian government has long committed censorship, abuses against media professionals, including prosecutions of journalists under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. Because of this during the protests, the actors of subaltern slipped from mainstream media to social media to resisting the status quo. The declaration of the state of emergency has appeared aggravating the long-term commute of the government. As a result of these directives thus this form of Subaltern space would become in jeopardy, and the actor (citizen journalists) will not have an opportunity to practice their power.

Secondly, the directives limit on communication to Non-Governmental Organizations, foreign governments, and other entities that can endanger the sovereignty, security and constitutional order of the country. In fact, the Subaltern has reportedly created communication with the so-called terrorist media by the government like ESAT, OMN during the protests. Besides, the government accused of Eritrea and Egypt on supporting and fueling the protests in Ethiopia. On this manner, this research would also recommend this if any foreign country interferes with the sovereignty of the country and the government must not impose NGOs working on human rights either as well. So that, the researcher argued that the Subaltern must understand they can bring change by themselves and human right watch can help them in the peaceful protests. Regarding the media restriction, the directive would impose the subaltern especially not to share and follow the views of those media outlet as it restricts listening/watching, availing, and reporting their broadcasts which have happened as a voice of the Subaltern during the protests.

And so forth, some of the other restrictions the directive has imposed throughout the country includes failure to provide public services, closure of shops, and absenteeism
from work without sufficient reason; threatening and intimidating employees of government and private institutions from attending their work; inciting violence and unrest that are against sport ethics at sport grounds; obstruction or disruption of public and religious ceremonies, or reciting slogans with political content and unrelated to the ceremonies; any press statements by political parties that can endanger the sovereignty, security and constitutional order of the country. This research consequently argues since subaltern space was the implication where people reflect their grievances against the government and how Facebook as the social media platforms and citizen journalism as a counter-hegemonic practice express people’s right to communicate and civic virtuousness, the directives would directly or indirectly threaten its prospects to bring socio-political change in the country.

Conclusion
This research sought to demonstrate the courses and prospects of social media particularly Facebook as an alternate Subaltern space and citizen journalism as a counter-hegemonic practice appeared during Oromo and Amhara protests and under the state of emergency in Ethiopia. To achieving its objectives, the research has employed qualitative research technique. Subaltern spaces are places whereby the features of freedom entertained, for instance, free speech and expression, reporting, debate, direct participation, resistance to power and domination. These are the very value of human freedom, social justice, and equity contrary to censorship, systemic oppression, and exploitation. Subaltern comprises groups considered as marginalized in class, race, gender, and background either politically, economically or socially. Subalternism, therefore, infers revolution and fighting power from below through forms of communication in the aim of mobilizing and advocating ideologies of liberation and freedom from oppression. To achieve these goals social networks like Facebook is decisive in advancing subaltern interests (Oromo and Amhara protesters) and the creation of spaces that allow the subaltern to speak.

The research found out that the protesters have used Subaltern space extensively to spreading their agenda throughout the country and even to the world as the mainstream media in Ethiopia is highly regulated by the government for instance by Anti-Terrorism Law. The research has then selected four sample cases to show where Subaltern spaces have used extensively. First when the immediate cause of the protests erupts which is the introduction of Addis Ababa City Integrated Master Plan as the Subaltern has claimed the Master Plan would excise land from Oromia, and cause forced eviction of farmers. The government in response arrested and charged the decisive Subaltern actors such as Bekele Gerba, Deputy Chairperson of Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), Dejene Tafa, Deputy General Secretary of OFC, and others under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. This Anti-Terrorism Law has long been bowed by many as the government used it to silent the political opposition, private newspapers, bloggers, and activists.

The Second case where protesters exercised their Subaltern space was when Feyissa Lilesa, an ethnic Oromo Marathon runner, crossed his wrists above his head in an X, a gesture that came to define the Oromo protests, as he crossed the finishing line at the Rio Olympics to win the silver medal. The news brought the Oromo protest to an international arena as it got the coverage of many international media outlets. Another instance where Subaltern space heavily exercised was during the tragedy that took place on 2 October 2016 in Bishoftu during the celebration of Irrecha which left many protesters to death. In here too, Facebook plays a huge role in manifesting the intensity of the protest by sharing video and photo of the dead bodies and the action of the soldier during the protests. The other protest escalated the enactment of Subaltern space was in Amhara region of Ethiopia at the end of July 2016 against the arbitrary arrest of Wolkait Amhara Identity and
Self-determination Committee members. This research also reveals that the government deems suppressing the Subaltern space by using forces to both protests boiled by new media technologies. What’s more, the government announced a country-wide six-month state of emergency claiming that it is crucial in response to the threat posed by “anti-peace groups in close collaboration with foreign elements.”

Consequently, the research unveils what the prospects of Subaltern space would be under the directives of the state of emergency. Accordingly, the declaration of the State of Emergency appeared aggravating the long-term commute of the government to preserving the status quo. As a result of these directives thus this form of Subaltern space would become in jeopardy, and the actor (citizen journalists) will not have an opportunity to practice their power.

Reference


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