MEDIA PLURALISM: A CORNERSTONE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

[1]Samuel Oluwole Fatokun and [2]Cecilia Olufunke Adebayo
[1&2]Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji_Arakeji, Akure-Ilesa Express way, Osun State.
[1]fatokunsamuel65@gmail.com, olufunkiss@gmail.com

Abstract

Access to information is essential to the health of democracy for at least two reasons. First, it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation. Secondly, information serves a "checking function" by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them which can only be done through media pluralism. But many post-communist nations have restrictive media regulations that limit the freedom of the press that is protected by their constitutions or by international agreements that they have ratified. Government control of media in many African countries leave little scope for dissenting opinions and public debate. Such are the obstacles to media freedom. A small number of families dominate the media in Central America, endangering the democratic achievements made possible by the peace process of the 1990s. This article, takes a look at media pluralism as a cornerstone for sustainable democratic society. The first section treated the background information, followed by "Democratic theory and media roles" that lead to the three models, the next section takes a look at Pluralism in the media and democracy, which shows the duties of media in active pluralized society. The outcome of this article reveals that Media pluralism and the plurality of media content is a catalyst for sustainable democratic society, as it helps citizens to take right decision and choose wisely and hold leaders accountable. This Article concluded that without active media pluralism, healthy democracy is invisible.

Key Words: Media pluralism, Cornerstone, Sustainable, Democracy, Society.

INTRODUCTION

One of the main themes in democratic media policy today is media pluralism. Nevertheless, there have long been worries about media ownership and control concentrations. It is now generally acknowledged that offering a variety of media outputs has value and importance especially in the last few decades. Yet there is a strange passivity about the manifestation of media pluralism policy at all levels, whether in particular states or by way of international discussion such as that in the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2003) or the European Union (Commission of the European Communities, 2007). Media pluralism is regarded as desirable because it is a condition albeit one of many for effective democratic functioning, because it helps to reduce obstacles to having a wide range of information resources for democratic consideration. But policy measures usually stop short of encompassing the way that those resources are to be used, even though the underlying assumption is that it is desirable that they will in fact be deployed to the benefit of democratic understanding and decision making.

The idea of "pluralism" has emerged as a point of reference in discussions about how western media operate in recent years. To start with, a number of citizens and non-governmental organizations are worried about the state of the media, and they seek to both inform the public and encourage political institutions to take action.

For example, since 2010, a civic and a journalistic organization (respectively, 'European Alternatives' and 'Alliance Internationale de Journalistes') have been working on a 'European Initiative for Media Pluralism'.1 The non-profit organization nowadays brings together nearly 100 organizations and aims to mobilize 1million European citizens to sign its online petition on media freedom and pluralism. Because, as they state, 'the deterioration of media pluralism in

Europe is above all a threat to democracy'. Likewise, on a global scale, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states that 'media pluralism is essential for providing choice to the public and is fundamental for democratic development' (Karklins in Mendel, 2013: 7). Moreover, media pluralism has gained prominence not only within public and political debates, but also in debates among academics. A trend that has also been noticed by Broughton-Micova (2012), describing the 2012 Oxford Media Convention on the LSE Media Policy Project blog: it was to be expected that the hacking scandal and the events culminating in the Leveson Inquiry would dominate this year's Oxford Media Convention. However, the key word that emerged from the presentations and discussion was not ethics, or self-regulation, but media pluralism – much desired but as yet rather undefined. Indeed, it is remarkable to what extent media pluralism serves as a buzzword or as a decontextualized taken-for-granted concept. It is generally unclear what is meant by referring to pluralistic media content or how pluralistic media should operate within Western democratic societies. Although media metaphors such as 'marketplaces of ideas' or 'public forums' are adopted regularly as democratic benchmarks, the discourse of pluralism underpinning these popular conceptions generally remains unspecified.

Questions about the exact meaning and implications of pluralism are neglected in favour of questions about the assumed level of pluralism in a given media landscape. However, as Karppinen (2013) remarks, empirical studies on media pluralism might lead to contra-dictory outcomes, depending on the perspective one take. Therefore, there is an urgent need for studies that make media pluralism, as a philosophic-theoretical concept, the object of investigation, before it is made the standard by which other objects, like media landscapes or content, are evaluated. The goal of this article is to distinguish between different conceptual and normative assumptions about media, pluralism, and democracy, Media Pluralism and its roles in strengthening a democratic society.

DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND MEDIA ROLES
This discussion is centered on three democratic theories which imply different frameworks for evaluating the role and performance of media: the liberal, deliberative and agonistic democracy models. The liberal model and its basic values still provide a basis for contemporary media policy and media research. However, much of the discussion in academic debates on media and democracy nowadays leans on the framework of deliberative democracy. The agonistic model, lastly, has recently gained prominence within political philosophy, but has only been used sporadically in media studies (Karppinen, 2013).

The Liberal model
The liberal-aggregative model (mostly abbreviated into the 'liberal model') conceives society as a complex of competing groups and interests, in which power is fragmented and widely diffused. The goal of democratic decision-making in the aggregative model is to decide what leaders, rules, and policies best correspond with the most widely and strongly held preferences (Christians et al., 2009). Political institutes, like parliaments and governments – are eventually entrusted with the task of solving disputes in today's complex, heterogeneous society by means of identifying majority preferences, and trans-forming these into a widespread consensus. Its starting point is that most people lack the necessary expertise for the efficient managing of public affairs and, therefore, they have to elect informed and competent elites who will represent their concerns in democratic bodies, like the parliament (Lippmann, 1922; Offe, 2011).Within this democratic context of representation and public affairs management, the main goals of media are checking on the government and informing and representing the people (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007; Louw, 2005). This third key democratic function of representing the people to authority is deemed as the culmination of the media's mission (Curran, 2002). The liberal model considers media as intermediaries or transmitters between democratic institutes and the public. By representing individuals' divergent needs and views, media inform political elites about disputes,

which can subsequently be addressed within political institutes. This corresponds to the monitorial role, as specified by McQuailin's volume Normative Theories of the Media (Christians et al., 2009). Performing a monitorial (or representative) role, media commit themselves to the collection, processing, and distribution of all kinds of information on society. This role resonates in the popular metaphors of media as 'mirrors of society' and 'marketplaces of ideas' (Ekron, 2008). This assumption of media content as a reflection of reality corresponds to the expectation of a mimetic, authentic, and truthful coverage. Such coverage can only be ensured by relying on a set of professional practices, routines, and textual conventions, generally referred to as objectivity, balance, and impartiality (e.g. Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007). Furthermore, liberal scholars traditionally believe these professional journalistic standards to be primarily endangered by governments. Thus, to ensure media's independence, media should be anchored to the free market and operate like commercialized entities (Anand et al., 2007). Consequently, as 'marketplaces of ideas', media respond to consumer choice. Indeed, it is expected that consumers' buying behavior and the enduring competition of other media outlets will stimulate journalists to present their stories in a factual and balanced way, as the audience is only willing to pay for – what they conceive as – 'good' or objective journalism.

The Deliberative model
The deliberative democracy model, on the other hand, criticizes liberal theory's expert focus, individual representative character, and its competitive-representative negotiation of social heterogeneity by the majoritarian principle. Deliberative scholars believe a democratic consensus should result from rational communicative practices between 'ordinary' people rather than from formal elitist decision-making processes (Benhabib, 1996; Gutmann and Thompson, 2004; Habermas, 1996). This involves rational debate between citizens over disputes and common problems, leading to a critically informed public opinion that can guide decision-makers in reaching consensus (Dahlberg, 2007b). Consequently, political decision-making is established through new, appropriate procedures that seek to institute equal and free citizen participation.

The deliberative model then considers media as more than transmitters of social heterogeneity: media serve as the public sphere's preeminent institution where public consensus is constructed (Habermas, 1989 cited in Kleinschmit, 2012). Or, as Poster (1997) claims, 'the media are the public sphere' (p. 217). This implies that media should prominently act as 'public forums' in complex, heterogeneous societies, maintaining public debate in order to solve societal disputes and arrive at public consensus, in addition to mimetically informing authorities about potentially crucial issues (Curran, 2002). This relates to the facilitative role of media, described in Normative Theories of the Media as 'helping to develop a shared moral framework for community and society, rather than just looking after individual rights and interests' (Christians et al., 2009: 126). Ideally, this shared moral framework, or public consensus, is reached by rational-critical media debate.

According to Habermas (1996), 'agreement on issues and contributions develops only as the result of more or less exhaustive controversy in which proposals, information, and reasons can be more or less rationally dealt with. The deliberative model thus posits a reflexive, impartial, reasoned exchange of validity claims where only the force of better argument 'wins out' (Dahlberg, 2005: 113). To allow for such a media debate, deliberative scholars prefer more participatory structures to an exclusively professional-commercialized media system. They fear that market-oriented media undermine intelligent and rational debate, as they process information like a commodity – presenting it in a simplified, personalized, and decontextualized form – and address publics as consumers instead of citizens (e.g. Habermas, 1989).

Participatory media, on the other hand, explicitly focus on dialogue and interaction with their publics: journalism should be two-way instead of one-way, collective instead of hierarchical and public instead of professional (Macdonald, 2006; Singer, 2007). Therefore, deliberative media scholars mostly concentrate on the deployment of user-generated content by professional media organizations (e.g. Wardle and Williams, 2010) or on the performance of all kinds of

Internet platforms, as the Internet is often expected to challenge passivity and facilitate citizen participation (e.g. Blumler and Gurevitch,
2001; Poster, 1997).

The Agonistic model
A second alternative to the liberal model is the agonistic democracy model. This model is not only skeptical about the individualist-competitive instruments of contemporary liberal democracies, but also and foremost about the normative post ideological framework underlying both liberal and deliberative practices (Dahlberg, 2007b; Hands, 2007). It argues that the belief in the possibility of a universal rational or moral consensus misunderstands the heterogeneous nature of society and the essence of democracy; democratic politics cannot, nor could it ever, produce the kind of coherent and unified society that is reconcilable with liberal and deliberative ontology. Mouffe, in particular (2000, 2005, and 2013), has argued how antagonism and conflict are constitutive of the social condition: Any form of consensus is always based on acts of exclusion. The labeling of one position as 'extreme', and another as 'moderate' and the promotion of the latter as the most 'reasonable', is highly ideological in that it promotes the status-quo definition of what is 'extreme' and 'moderate' (Dahlberg, 2007a: 834). It entails the naturalization of dominant power relations and the exclusion of dissident social groups and concerns (Dahlberg, 2005). In other words, the public sphere is interpreted as a battlefield of hegemonic practices which can never be reconciled. Thus, as agonistic scholars consider it not only impossible, but also undesirable, to overcome ideological conflict and dissent, they argue for a political space that transparently manifests existing differences and allows for respectful contestation between clearly differentiated political positions.

Since the agonistic school has only recently gained prominence within political philosophy, little has been written about the role of media. In an interview with media scholars, Mouffe stated, for instance, that, ideally, the role of the media should precisely be to contribute to the creation of agonistic public spaces in which there is the possibility for dissensus to be expressed or different alternatives to be put forward. But on the other hand, the media cannot just create this out of the blue, that is why the main responsibility – for me – still lies with the political parties. (Mouffe in Carpentier and Cammaerts, 2006: 974)

In other words, within the agonistic model, media serve as fields of ideological contestation to stimulate public and essentially political debate. This function of the media is labeled by Carpentier and Cammaerts (2006) as the 'increase of pluralism and agon ism through journalism'. Here, Christians et al. (2009) refer to the radical role of media, which 'focuses on exposing abuses of power and aims to raise popular consciousness of wrongdoing, inequality, and the potential for change' (p. 126). It is radical in the sense that such journalism has the potential of mobilizing resistance or protest (Trappel et al., 2011). Thus, for agonistic media scholars, it is crucial that the media space is re-concep-tualized as a space of genuine ideological struggle and conflict (Dahlberg, 2007b; Karppinen, 2013).

TRADITIONAL NOTIONS OF MEDIA PLURALISM REGULATION
Media pluralism policy is justified on two main grounds: the provision of a wide range of sources that can be used for democratic discussion and the ability of different groups in a democratic society to express their cultural and values differences in media content. In media policy, the idea of pluralism is often used interchangeably with notions such as "diversity," "plurality of information" and "multiplicity of voices." The general concept both describe and make normative claims about various commercial models and forms of content that can or should be found in the media. Noting the complexity of definition, a recent review describes media pluralism as being related to (1) diversity, variety and plurality of media supply; (2) the public sphere, the general public or the audience; it is (3) provided by free, independent and autonomous media sources, and (4) results in both access and a choice of opinions and

representations which reflect the citizens of the State in question. (Centre for Media Pluralism and Freedom, 2012, p. 22)

However, there seems little disagreement that the ultimate objective of policy is to secure a Plurality of media content. Where there is considerable divergence is about the best way to achieve that.

In practice, regulatory schemes feature combinations of at least three components—diversity of content, of source, and of distribution platform, but it is diversity of content that lies at the core of media pluralism. It relates to the substance of media material, requiring that a wide range of views, opinions, approaches, formats, and subject matter be made available. The normative significance of diversity of content arises from its function in a democratic society, and it is usually taken to include all kinds of content, whether it is popular common sense, scientific knowledge, art and culture, or political debate.

Diversity of source relates to the origin of the content. It requires a variety of program or information producers, editors, or owners. Although such variety in itself cannot guarantee diversity of content, it increases the likelihood that diverse content will emerge and that the flow of information will not fall under the control of a few powerful individuals or companies. Typically, diversity of source implies that content will be provided by a number of separate organizations—that is, external pluralism, also described as "structural pluralism" (Council of Europe, 1999, para. 3); regulatory measures to implement that will be a combination of competition law and ownership regulation to prevent undue concentrations of media power. It also may entail that single organizations, such as public-service broadcasters, should ensure that their output reflects a variety of production sources—that is, internal pluralism.

Diversity of distribution refers to the various delivery services that select and present material directly to the audience. This third dimension is important but it is not always acknowledged (European Institute for the Media, 2004, p. 9). Again, its relationship with diversity of content is indirect: The latter cannot be guaranteed, but the likelihood may be increased that individuals can make choices that allow them to experience a range of content. It is becoming more significant in the context of the separation of media content from delivery and increased convergence of delivery platforms. Formerly, it would have been sufficient to regulate sector-specific sources of material, since they would usually control the outlets also; an example would be a vertically integrated broadcaster. Now, regulation may be needed to ensure that a diversity of content can be accessed across a range of different platforms (Helberger, 2005).

It is evident that the underlying theme in policy discussion of media pluralism, across all its dimensions of diversity, is that information should simply be accessible. All that is required is that members of a democratic society should be exposed to the range of different viewpoints that exist and should have their viewpoints adequately represented (Council of Europe, 2003; Craufurd Smith, 1997; Hitchens, 2007; Valcke et al., 2010). As the Council of Europe (1999) has stated, "It should be stressed that pluralism is about diversity in the media that is made available to the public, which does not always coincide with what is actually consumed" (para. 3). Describing media pluralism only recently, the European Union's High-Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism noted that it "encompasses all Measures that ensure citizens' access to a variety of information sources and voices, allowing them to form opinions without the undue influence of one dominant opinion forming power" (Commission of the European Communities, 2013, p. 13).

APPROACHES TO MEDIA PLURALISM
There are four approaches to media pluralism according to Danielle Raeijmaekers &Pieter Maeseele 2015, each of these approaches implies a different conceptual and normative interpretation of media, pluralism, and democracy in general, and media pluralism in specific. These approaches are subsequently set out in terms of both their conceptual and normative assumptions and the specific research questions and analytical benchmarks that characterize them. Indeed, these different assumptions explain why different studies on media pluralism have

different expectations, ask different questions, and lead to different outcomes. For example, as Karppinen (2013) notes, 'increasing competition in the media market can lead to more diverse media content or to further homogenization, depending on the perspective one takes'.

Affirmative diversity

Media pluralism interpreted as 'affirmative diversity' is represented by the metaphors of media as 'mirrors of society' and 'marketplaces of ideas' and draws on the liberal-aggregative school of democratic theory. Conceptually, it relates to 'diversity' as it expects media to truthfully reflect the existing social heterogeneity. Normatively, the metaphor and underlying theory affirm a consensual notion of society, since the existing social heterogeneity of society is put forward as an ultimate benchmark to which media need to live up to. Moreover, in light of the fault lines, the metaphor holds specific assumptions regarding ideal media practices: To ensure a mimetic representation of social diversity, media practices should be evaluated on the extent to which they abide by the professional guidelines of objectivity, balance, and impartiality, and are responsive to the market.

Research starting from the affirmative diversity-approach is concerned about a balanced media representation of social diversity, for instance, in terms of actors, issues, and viewpoints. Scholars examine the existence and nature of possible imperfections incurrent media content, mostly addressed as 'media biases. In particular, they are concerned about a distorted sample of reality (e.g. Lin et al., 2011: 'regardless of a positive or negative stance towards an entity, an imbalanced quantity in coverage is itself a form of bias'). A well-known subfield is research on 'partisan media bias' (e.g. Groseclose and Milyo, 2005). In American studies on partisan media bias, the classic aim that media should strictly reflect social reality can be found in the implicit or explicit definition of fair coverage as the equal treatment of the two parties (Groeling, 2013: 143), which comes down to a 50/50 coverage or a coverage that is in line with the number of seats each party possesses.

Affirmative pluralism

Media pluralism interpreted as 'affirmative pluralism' is represented by the metaphor of media as 'public forums' and draws on the deliberative school of democratic theory. Conceptually, it addresses the notion of 'pluralism'. In that sense, it contrasts with the mirror-metaphor, since media are not just expected to transmit social diversity, but play an active role in the discursive formation of identities and concerns in general. Normatively, the metaphor and underlying theory affirmatively acknowledge and repro-duce a consensual notion of society, since critical-rational debate between free and equal citizens, facilitated by media, allows us to overcome divergent viewpoints. Moreover, in practice, deliberative scholars believe media debates can only overcome social disputes and achieve public consensus if they build upon rational arguments and are characterized by participatory structures.

Research starting from the affirmative pluralism-approach focuses both on the diversity of identities and concerns mostly addressed as 'inclusivity' and on the ways different identities and concerns are discursively portrayed. In that sense, concerns about quantity and ratio are complemented with concerns about quality. 'What we have to assess is what is being said and how' (Ruiz et al., 2011: 465). Within affirmative plural-ism-research, 'quality' has been linked to the use of arguments and rationality, among other requirements of 'good debate', like reaching consensus. 'These attitudes require behaviors that adhere to a rational and ethical protocol for conversation; the discursive ethics proposed by Habermas offers a solid normative grounding' (Ruiz et al., 2011: 466). Furthermore, different deliberative media studies look at media characteristics that either stimulate or impede a rational, qualitative debate. Nowadays, with the rise of the internet as an interactive space, an increasing number of scholars asserts the (ir)relevance of the internet for the facilitation of deliberation and the overcoming of social differences, by sampling for different blogs, commentary sections, online discussion forums, and

so on (e.g. Wright and Street, 2007; Zhang et al., 2013).

Critical diversity
Inspired by the school of critical political economy, media pluralism interpreted as 'critical diversity' is illustrated by the metaphor of media as 'cultural industries'. Conceptually, it follows the ideal of media as mirrors: It focuses on the neutral and truthful representation of pre-existing social diversity. However, normatively, it believes that society is characterized by structural inequalities mostly economic and that these inequalities negatively influence media representation. Moreover, concerned about structural constraints, political economy theorists argue for media regulation. Restrictions on the commercial organization of media organizations, together with professional journalistic guidelines, must contribute to an objective representation of social heterogeneity and disputes.

Studies starting from a critical diversity-approach are like those inspired by the mirror-metaphor, also concerned about a balanced media representation of social diversity. However, instead of focusing solely on media content, their concern lays mainly with the commercial interests and mechanisms of media organizations and the routines of media practitioners, and how these determine the level of diversity within media coverage. Clearly, the research field is divided because of the unlimited range of structural characteristics. For example, regarding ownership, research can focus on ownership concentration (e.g. Hanretty, 2014), the agenda of owners (e.g. Anand et al., 2007), ownership structures (e.g. Yanich, 2010), or ownership limits (e.g. Horwitz, 2005). Apart from ownership, there are also examples of a focus on other structural characteristics such as the role of advertisers (e.g. Ellman and Germano, 2009) or more general studies including multiple variables (e.g. Valcke et al., 2009; Woods, 2007). Moreover, notwithstanding the large amount of empirical critical diversity-studies, results on the effects of structural characteristics on media content are often contradictory and ambiguous (Horwitz, 2005).

Critical pluralism
Inspired by both cultural studies and the agonistic school of democratic theory, the critical pluralism approach is represented by the metaphor of media as 'sites of struggle' or 'fields of contestation'. Conceptually, the metaphor relates to the notion of 'pluralism': It is concerned with the discursive contestation of ideological viewpoints. Normatively, it believes society is marked by hegemonic ideological assumptions, which are either reproduced by or addressed and contested in media representation. To counter the often-widespread hegemonic preferences in the commercial media market, this approach often looks to radical or alternative media for stimulating democratic debate.

Similar to the affirmative pluralism-approach, the critical pluralism-approach not only looks at the diversity of identities and concerns, but also at their discursive portrayal, and is therefore also concerned with the quality of the debate. However, quality is not linked to rationalism and consensus, but to ideological conflict, contestation, and dissent. 'Whereas deliberative research focuses on the amount and character of deliberation taking place within media coverage, the research question reorients to focus on contestation within and between discourse' (Dahlberg, 2007a: 838). In other words, critical pluralism research is concerned about the performance of media in terms of the range of discourses with a focus on the presence of counter-dominant discourses and the mediated construction or presentation of these discourses, in terms of their discursive (de) legitimation (Phelan, 2007; Philo, 1995; Thetela, 2001). Furthermore, studies look at media characteristics that either stimulate or impede a democratic debate, distinguishing between whether an issue is framed as an ideological debate involving key political choices between genuine alternatives, or to the contrary, as a (predefined consensual) matter about which debate is counterproductive (Maeseele, 2013; Maeseele, 2015a; Raeijmaekers and Maeseele, 2014).

PLURALISM IN THE MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

Doyle (2002) describes two forms of media pluralism. Firstly, 'political pluralism' relates to the representation of a range of political opinions necessary for democracy. In contrast, 'cultural pluralism' relates to the need for the diverse groups in society to have access to the media. Doyle sets out three linked determinants of media pluralism in addition to diversity of ownership: market size (which constrains the resources available to media); the consolidation of resources (the extent to which different media products draw on the same resources); and diversity of output. She notes that there may be trade-offs between these factors – for example, in small markets, diversity of output may require a more consolidated market structure, with relatively few outlets.

Noting a large body of literature on definitions of media diversity and media plurality, Karppinen (2010) notes the complexities in defining media pluralism and media plurality, and states "...there is no commonly agreed definition of either media pluralism or media diversity, let alone their relationship to each other" [p.94].

With reference to McQuail's distinction between media pluralism and diversity, Freedman (2008)73 argues that 'pluralism' can be seen as relating to the political environment in which the media is situated, while 'diversity' as a concept concerns the ability of media to deliver a range of content which relates to current differences in society. Despite being a policy that is viewed as having broad merits, and being important for democracy, media pluralism is complex and can be interpreted in different ways (Klimkiewicz, 2009). In relation to media policy, key concepts have been internal plurality (diversity of media content available to the public) and external plurality (plurality of autonomous and independent media).

Czepek (2009) notes that freedom of the press is seen as an important feature in democracies. Content pluralism can be seen as a measure of press freedom. Journalism which is free from state interference, and interference from economic interests, is necessary to give citizens the information they need in a democratic society and to enable citizens to participate in debates. Levels of content pluralism may indicate levels of self-censorship. Therefore, in a democratic society where active media pluralism is practicable, the media will be the mirror of the society and perform the following functions objectively.

Providing Information

Providing information is the most passive approach to pluralist content. A wide range of material may be provided, allowing the audience to use it as it thinks fit. Such provision is passive to the extent that no attempt is made to relate different kinds of information to one another. All media providers maybe expected to seek out new viewpoints and to represent a greater variety of possible standpoints, but if information is merely provided, then it is for members of the audience and users to make linkages or to draw out the significance of diversity. In a traditional, linear broadcasting environment, an important skill in making audiences aware of different types of content is that of scheduling programs in ways that tempt audiences to stay with the same channel and thereby experience new information. In relation to nonlinear programming, it becomes more important to provide pathways to new programming, whether through promotional announcements or through technical devices such as electronic program guides (Gibbons, 2000). Yet, in both cases, whether audiences alight on material new to them, or if such pathways provide efficient navigation through a range of channels or web pages, the impact on pluralism will be passive if their effect is only to alert users to the existence of diverse content. The relatively recent phenomenon of linking audiovisual program material to Internet sources or to social networking activity does not necessarily increase the level of activism if it captures only trends in the following of particular items of information.

Enabling Participation

At least two basic roles for media may be identified for enabling participation. One is difficult to quantify and consists of the media being little more than an "introduction agency," whereby

members of the audience, readerships, or users are alerted to the existence of issues or problems and prompted to take matters further by contacting external interest or pressure groups where they can participate in political discussion. The more prominent participatory role for the media, with many variations, relates to their use as a forum or platform for some exchange of viewpoints or a discussion. For example, the studio discussion is a traditional television format, more recently developed into organizing a panel of politicians or public commentators who are exposed to questions from an appropriately representative audience. Or a documentary may present a range of perspectives about an issue in a concentrated form.

In recent years, it has become common for established media such as newspapers and television to create blogs on their websites and to create links to social networking media. This gives the impression of facilitating discussion, but casual inspection suggests that it is rarely an adequate substitute for organized debate. Generally, optimism that the mere existence of social media can lead to improved democratic debate may be misplaced (Iosifides, 2011). Nevertheless, enabling participation that consists of simply the ability to "express" and no more is not without democratic value. It may provide a vent for feelings, and it may indicate broad trends of opinion, albeit to be treated with caution as a proxy for a representative sample. Not least, and this is especially relevant for public-service media, it also enables feedback on the provider's service, which is part of making the provider accountable. For all that these approaches can provide a more controlled consideration of conflicting viewpoints, their contribution to active pluralism depends on whether the agenda and topics adequately reflect the range of viewpoints available and whether the discussion is focused and structured so that the parties can address one another's points. This, in turn, depends on the extent to which the media provider acts as a facilitator for the participants to engage with one another.

Encouraging Participation and Provoking Discussions
Is there a case for media to go further, not only enables exchanges of information and opinion by those who are interested in talking to each other but actively promoting engagement and provoking debate? The discussion so far has proceeded on the assumption that healthy internal relationships within any society require more than the mere acknowledgement of diversity, one that is accompanied by strategic negotiation between factions. Rather, for a democracy to function effectively as a legitimate basis for political decision making, some form of public dialogue is needed, to ensure that different positions are properly taken into account, in a process of reasoning that leads to decisions that are acceptable to all. As indicated in the discussion of pluralism generally, this does not mean that democratic debate is wholly rationalist and directed at the ultimate reconciliation of conceptual differences. In complex multicultural democracies, assertions of identity and beliefs about fundamental values need to be accommodated and may be expressed through rhetoric and emotion. Ultimately, however, a democratic settlement is validated by dialogue about such differences and consequent agreement about their practical resolution (Dryzek, 2000; Festenstein, 2005). The question is how far media should go in assisting this process. At the very least, as described earlier, they might be expected to present information about the range of positions available; but should they seek to make the parties aware of their differences? Newspapers and websites may provide op-ed sections and broadcasters might be expected to bring different positions together, whether through physical debate or through programming that portrays comparisons and contrasts. But how far should they facilitate deeper engagement? In many ways, the roles outlined above are reactive. They are public-interest responses to relatively noncontroversial states of affairs: the existence of obvious diversity or the evident wish of some individuals and organizations to take part in discussion. But should the media intervene actively to uncover unnoticed forms of diversity or to maneuver parties into engaging with one another? Here, commercial providers and public-service providers may prefer different approaches. The former, in the shape of newspapers or web operators, may welcome controversy; whereas the latter are likely to resist such a role. In the UK, for example, public-service broadcasting has not set the agenda for political debate. Its journalism has tended

to take its cues from newspaper journalism and its coverage of current affairs tends to be guided by the interests of Members of Parliament. Furthermore, there is a risk that a public-service media provider might antagonize its audience if it was perceived to be overtly instructional, notwithstanding the general public-service duty to inform, educate, and entertain.

DISCUSSION

Access to information is essential to the health of democracy for at least two reasons. First, it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation. Second, information serves a "checking function" by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them. This can only be done through media pluralism.

In some societies, an antagonistic relationship between media and government represents a vital and healthy element of fully functioning democracies. In post-conflict or ethnically homogenous societies such a conflictual, tension-ridden relationship may not be appropriate, but the role of the press to disseminate information as a way of mediating between the state and all facets of civil society remains critical.

Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Within the context of supporting democratic transitions, the goal of media development generally should be to move the media from one that is directed or even overtly controlled by government or private interests to one that is more open and has a degree of editorial independence that serves the public interest. If the media is to have any meaningful role in democracy, then the ultimate goal of media assistance should be to develop a range of diverse mediums and voices that are credible, and to create and strengthen a sector that promotes such outlets. Credible outlets enable citizens to have access to information that they need to make informed decisions and to participate in society as stated by Doyle (2002) who describes media pluralism in two forms. Firstly, 'political pluralism' which relates to the representation of a range of political opinions necessary for democracy and 'cultural pluralism' which relates to the need for the diverse groups in society to have access to the media. A media sector supportive of democracy would be one that has a degree of editorial independence, is financially viable, has diverse and plural voices, and serves the public interest. The public interest is defined as representing a plurality of voices both through a greater number of outlets and through the diversity of views and voices reflected within one outlet. This goes against what is happening in the media industry in the recent word as government now retain the power to silence the media and dictate what to tell the populace as editorial independence is bygone due to the need for the media to survive economically. in a democratic society where active media pluralism is practicable, the media will be the mirror of the society and perform the its functions objectively which includes, provision of information, Enabling participation, Encouraging participation and provoking debates. This corroborates the deliberative model where Deliberative scholars believe a democratic consensus should result from rational communicative practices between 'ordinary' people rather than from formal elitist decision-making processes (Benhabib, 1996; Gutmann and Thompson, 2004; Habermas, 1996). This involves rational debate between citizens over disputes and common problems, leading to a critically informed public opinion that can guide decision-makers in reaching consensus. Consequently, political decision-making is established through new, appropriate procedures that seek to institute equal and free citizen participation.

Since society is also conceives by Liberal Model as a complex of competing groups and interests, in which power is fragmented and widely diffused. The goal of democratic decision-making in the aggregative model is to decide how leaders, rules, and policies best correspond with the most widely and strongly held preferences. Political institutes, like parliaments and governments are eventually entrusted with the task of solving disputes in today's complex,

heterogeneous society by means of identifying majority preferences, and transforming these into a widespread consensus. Its starting point is that most people lack the necessary expertise for the efficient managing of public affairs and, therefore, they have to elect informed and competent elites who will represent their concerns in democratic bodies, like the parliament. Within this democratic context of representation and public affairs management, the main goals of media are checking on the government and informing and representing the people. This key democratic function of representing the people to authority is deemed as the culmination of the media's mission as the model considers media as intermediaries or transmitters between democratic institutes and the public. By representing individuals' divergent needs and views, media inform political elites about disputes, which can subsequently be addressed within political institutes. This corresponds to the monitorial role, as specified by McQuailin's volume Normative Theories of the Media (Christians et al., 2009). Performing a monitorial (or representative) role, media commit them-selves to the collection, processing, and distribution of all kinds of information on society.

The four approaches according to Danielle Raeijmaekers &Pieter Maeseele 2015, is considered important in a democratic society where media pluralism is in operation. The approaches are Affirmative diversity represented by the metaphors of media as 'mirrors of society' and 'marketplaces of ideas' and draws on the liberal school of democratic theory. Conceptually, it relates to 'diversity' as it expects media to truthfully reflect the existing social heterogeneity.

Affirmative pluralism which is represented by the metaphor of media as 'public forums' and draws on the deliberative school of democratic theory. Critical diversity illustrated by the metaphor of media as 'cultural industries'. It follows the ideal of media as mirrors: It focuses on the neutral and truthful representation of pre-existing social diversity. The critical pluralism approach is represented by the metaphor of media as 'sites of struggle' or 'fields of contestation'

CONCLUSION

This article takes a look at media pluralism as a yardstick for the growth of democracy and sustainable democratic society. It is evident through this article and some other articles in relation to this topic that media pluralism and contents not only help in influencing public and democratic debate but set a pace for the growth and development of real democracy.

The outcome of this article reveals that Media pluralism and the plurality of media content is a catalyst for sustainable democratic society, as it helps citizens to take right decision and choose wisely. It shows that without active media pluralism, healthy democracy is invisible while the opposite is possible.

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