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Community Radio, Residel and the S. P. H. Bridge Model: A Path to Sustainable Development

Abstract

The issue of information for development is a major challenge to many underdeveloped nations, despite the strategists that had been adopted and implemented. This study dwells on an analytical examination of the problems of development, and the challenges faced by the media as catalysts for progress. It observes that the media, especially in the Third World have been constrained. It identifies community radio as a way out, and recommends a model for adoption in the praxis of community radio.

Introduction

In many countries of the world, a lot of communication for development strategies has been introduced. Moreover, in the advanced societies, new forms of communication technologies are being introduced, which seems an innate part of the way of existence of the people. The invaluable impact of the Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM) and the Internet technology cannot be overemphasized. Media experts like Cairncross (2000) have submitted that in this contemporary age, what seems distant or remote or far away is brought nearer to people's doorsteps, thereby creating the possibility of a global village.

But a divergent report by Gumisai Mutume states, "Africa has the fewest telephone lines, radios, television sets, computers and internet users of any part of the world". Each medium

aforementioned is modes used to package and transmit information and knowledge. These are broadly refereed to as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Mutume, 2003).

In respect of the above, it should be noted that many Third World countries suffer lack of basic infrastructures and facilities like good roads, electricity, water, health care, education, food, etc. which have impacted negatively on their lives. Against this unpleasant backdrop is the absence of worthwhile information and modern information dissemination techniques that can positively affect their lives. But there has to be a way out of these unfavourable conditions. Many development strategies have been propounded and executed as leeway out of the situation, little or no success have been recorded.

There has to be an attempt to cut down the number of those who are marginalized or deprived of development and worthwhile information within communities, and the seemingly isolated majority in the rural areas who have no access to information and the necessities of life. The question then is: What is the way out? In an earlier study, it had been observed that of all the aspects or modes of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), radio is the most potent, as it is a sure way of reaching out to the people in the interiors or in any community.

According to a One World publication, access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) "will ultimately enable the people of developing countries increased ability for economic growth and empowerment." The body argued that such access will allow for an increased access to education, which is a means by which people can be educated about their country and "offer greater credibility and support for their researchers and developers and an eventual narrowing of the digital divide."

Radio broadcasting as a medium of information communication technology is very relevant in the developing countries. It has remained the chief organ through which information is channeled to the generality of the people.

The importance of radio in Nigeria, for example, can be measured through the broad assortment of its listenership. Scores of preceding studies had signified that while about 60% (sixty percent) of the population might not have entrée to television, at least 70% (seventy

percent) could boast of a transistor radio.

Radio attends to the needs of the people or the society because of its special activity as a medium of imparting or disseminating news, entertainment norms or ideas etc. It is extensive in coverage and is able to penetrate virtually all areas as a result of its signals, which travel at about 300,000 kilometres per second.

It is also, as an object, economical. In other words, it is affordable costing little money to maintain and can be carried about just as it does not necessarily require electricity power to function.

The messages from the source to the receiver or destination are instant. This is because the message from the broadcaster in the studio to the listener outside is a synchronized activity. This is at 300,000 kilometres per second (this is about one million times faster than the speed of light). Thus, the listener to the radio is abreast with up-to-date and blow-by-blow accounts of events or news around the world.

As one of the mediums of information communication technology, radio serves as complement and support to the others i.e. television, Internet and computers. It transmits on three or four bands: AM, FM, SW1 and SW2. The receiver can receive signals from between 50 to 100 stations as well as from the Internet to the computer where audio programmes could be downloaded and rebroadcast through the local radio.

In addition to the above, radio can best be described as a medium of unification as it gives insight to the outside world not familiar to the listener. The listener, especially in the rural areas, is able to understand, through the power of seeing with the mind, events, norms or ideas, news and so on of other lands. This reduces prejudice as it opens the world to the ears.

A farmer, cattle nearer, fisherman etc. gets relaxed through music, talk shows news, etc. as they listen to the radio.

These advantages or qualities ascribed to radio broadcasting are basically concerned with reaching out to the people who may happen to be within the underdeveloped zones. The bulk of these people are in the communities: hence, the need to develop a truly community radio that will aid the building of participatory democracy and sustainable development in Nigeria and Africa in general.

Despite all the above stated advantages of radio, its usefulness

has not really been acknowledged. For example, Karen Ross (2001) had lamented that “radio as a medium has not enjoyed the same level of academic interest as its more flashy sister, television,” in spite of the fact that “it is a more available technology,” adding that its influence and range are outstandingly powerful. Ross argues, “radio is also the link with both the interior communities of a particular country.” Among other qualities of radio as outlined by Ross are its intimate nature, its services as a companion and its developmental potentials.

AFRICA				
YEAR: 2001				
Total Population: 800 Million People (AFRICA)				
Access/Statistics	1 in 4	1 in 13	1 in 40	1 in 30
UNIT OF ICTs	RADIO	TELEVISION	TELEPHONE	COMPUTER/ INTERNET

Facts sourced from “Africa and the Digital Divide,” Mutume, 2003, as explained in the article published by the *Punch Newspaper* (Nigeria) of Monday, December 29, 2003— page 17.

Expatriating on the Problem

Nigeria is, indisputable, the biggest country in sub Saharan Africa, and the nation seem to have an abundance of human and material resources.

However, it should be noted that the nature and size of the communication sector of any nation is largely influenced or determined by needs and factors, which could consist of political, economic, social, and technological, among others. Nigeria has the largest concentrations of radio stations among the countries of Africa. According to records, there are over 160 radio stations in the country, which are shared between the following: (i) the federal

government; (ii) the state governments; and (iii) private organisations; and, (iv) educational institutions. All these radio stations are concentrated in the big cities and urban centres. These radio stations broadcast mainly from the government point of view and the private ones, also concentrated in the urban centers like Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Kaduna, etc. have made the commercial motive to supercede any developmental intentions, while they also seem constrained and helpless as they operate under the strict supervision of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), a government agency.

During the past regime of Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo between 1999 and 2007, the government came up with a policy tagged "32 FRCN FM Project," that paved the way for the establishment of 32 mini FRCN FM stations in the rural areas of the country, and most were commissioned by the end of his tenure in 2007. The number of such stations has since risen above the thirty-two as more have been commissioned thereafter. It was thought that this move would help in the development of the people and their communities, and that it would aid in the bridging of the gap between the rural folks and the outside world. But the stations have, so far, remained appendages of the bigger FRCN central and regional stations that were mere government Tannoy and propaganda tools. Also, fresh licenses have been issued to some private companies and educational institutions like the University of Lagos and the University of Ibadan, amongst others to operate FM radio stations. The available statistics have indicated that poverty and the issue of empowerment and sustainable development are far from being solved.

Okunna (1995) had displayed an incandescent knowledge and understanding of the problem when she decried a situation that arose "from the use of the media to issue urban-originated directives to rural dwellers in a unidirectional linear flow of information, in which the rural populations play no active part in identifying their needs and in determining the types of messages relevant to meeting these needs." According to her, "one major cause of those failures was the use of inappropriate technology in communication for rural development."

Disraeli (1881:155) says, "As a general rule, the most successful

man in life is he who has the best information." Information is knowledge, while it is generally believed that the right kind of information is empowerment (Johnson, 2005).

In that regard, the policy formulation and direction needed to address these issues have to be geared towards the tackling of these problems. There is a need to identify the proper developmental initiative that can change the lives of the people in Nigeria that are faced with the problem of development and access to ICTs.

The Media to the Rescue?

Most Third World countries have the challenge of development in all sphere of human endeavour. In Africa, dictatorships still abound, and there is also what could be termed quasi-democracy. The general idea of governance has not brought about real or actual development of the peoples and their societies. As a result, there is a need for a way out. There is a need for sincere initiatives for a solution that will tackle the problems outlined above that will lead to the betterment of the lives of the people and that will also see to the growth of the nations. It has been said that the media, being agents or catalyst for change will play very important role in the task of development.

Among the problems plaguing most developing countries are:

1. Problem of genuine democracy;
2. Politics of manipulation;
3. Environmental problems;
4. Corruption;
5. Illiteracy;
6. Gender inequality;
7. Neglect of rural areas;
8. Diseases;
9. Wars and misunderstanding;
10. Masses empowerment;
11. A constrained media;
12. Low agricultural input and output;
13. Lack of/or unimproved infrastructure.

Be that as it may, the importance of the media, particularly radio and television, cannot be overemphasized. It explains further why the role of these broadcasting modes as agents of development that

can reach out to a wide number of people has been identified, but it must be noted that they have been constrained in meeting their respective aims and objectives by certain hindrances such as government intervention, official manipulation, inefficiency, mismanagement, commercialism, foreign programming, party politics, etc, and these conventional broadcast outfits cannot operate effectively (Farounbi, 1977); (Olugboji, 1997). These problems had to be confronted first through a creative approach. This is why it has been suggested and advocated that in broadcasting, community radio is a sure way out, and a true or genuine means of utilizing the media nay broadcasting as catalyst for change and national or sustainable development

Community Radio and the Social Capital, Proxemics, and Habermas

Community radio symbolizes the democratization of communications (AMARC, 1998). According to AMARC, it is a two-way communication process, which basically involves the exchange of views from various sources. It is the adoption of media for use by communities. At its best, community radio adopts the concept of the 10Ps (Olugboji, 2010). The concept stress that the members of the community Participate in the Planning and Production of Programmes and Performing or Presenting and the Promotion of the Station by the People of the community for Progress and Prosperity.

When adequately operated, the benefits derivable are that the language issue will be addressed; it takes care of the problems of human rights through the right to information and communication; it offers media education; it enhances freedom and self-worth; it serves as a platform for debate, exchange of ideas, reactions to plans and projects; it accommodate people's ideas and satisfy their spiritual and psychological well-being; and it preserves cultural identity. The hallmark of community radio is participation, and this is lacking in the operations of the conventional broadcasting. However, Phylis Johnson (2006) stressed, "Community radio is the community town-hall."

Social Capital

Community radio adopts elements of Lydia Judson Hanifan's Social Capital theory in its operations. Scholars like Robert D. Putnam, Pierre Bourdieu, James S. Coleman, and a host of others have consistently advocated and stressed the importance of Social Capital. It is the norms and networks that enable social action. It is critical to poverty alleviation and can best be accepted as those resources inherent in social relations that facilitate collective action (Garson, 1998).

Social Capital draws on a philosophy of the commons, which holds that individuals are not motivated by utilitarian self-interest in the pursuit of pleasure, but by complex social and individual goals (Kitty van Vuuren, 2000). Thus, Social Capital "creates the possibility for community development and it is also a key product of community development (Onyx and Bullen, 1997, quoted by Vuuren).

Moreover, Vuuren argues, "voluntary organizations enable individuals to directly participate in political activity, or in case of organizations without political aims, widen people's interests and contacts, and provides them with leadership skills which ultimately results in political mobilization."

Social Capital is a set of resources that is deep-rooted in social life and social organisations. It is a collective good that ensures that norms of mutual trust and social behaviour are respected (Carlos Milani et al., 2005). Thus, in an x-ray of social capital, Milani et al. explained that the organisation forms and the social institutions have great importance in quality and quantity of social capital in a given society. Thus, Milani and co. stressed further that while 'social' represents the association between people, 'capital' belongs to a collectivity or to a community. In this manner, resources, responsibilities and, ultimately, the benefits are shared among the society and do not favour a particular individual.

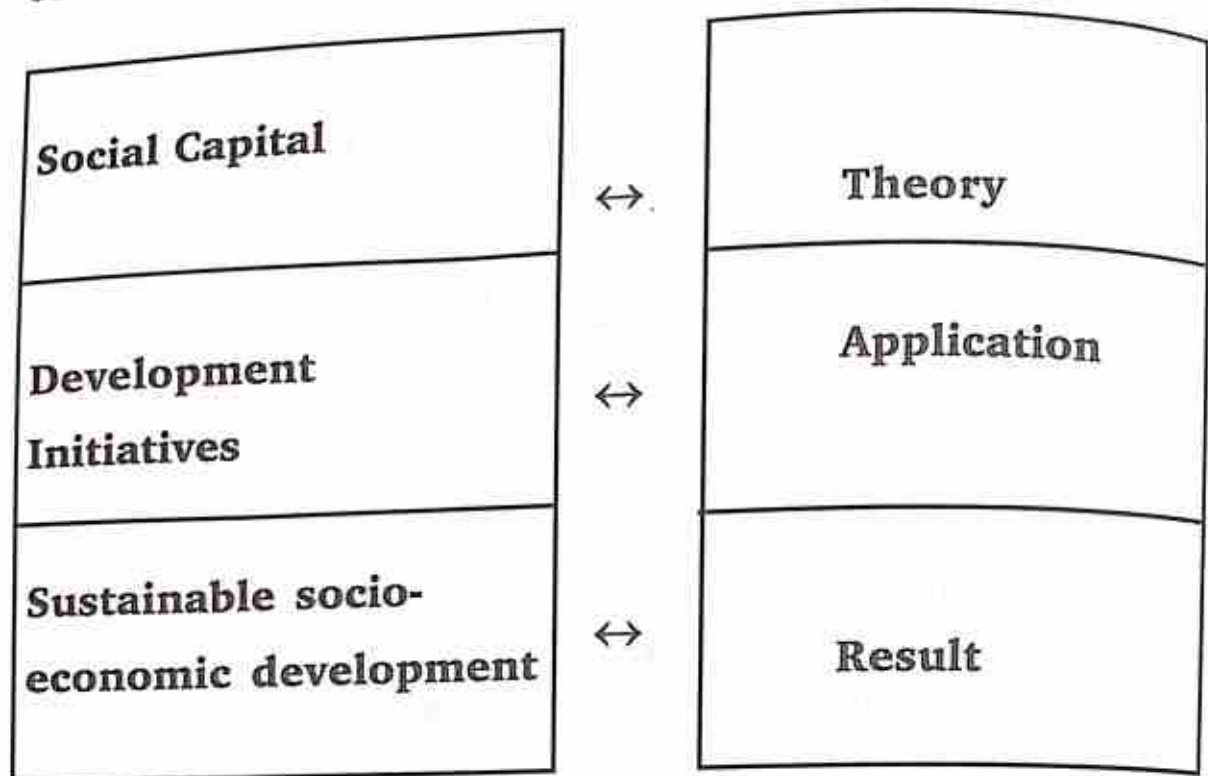


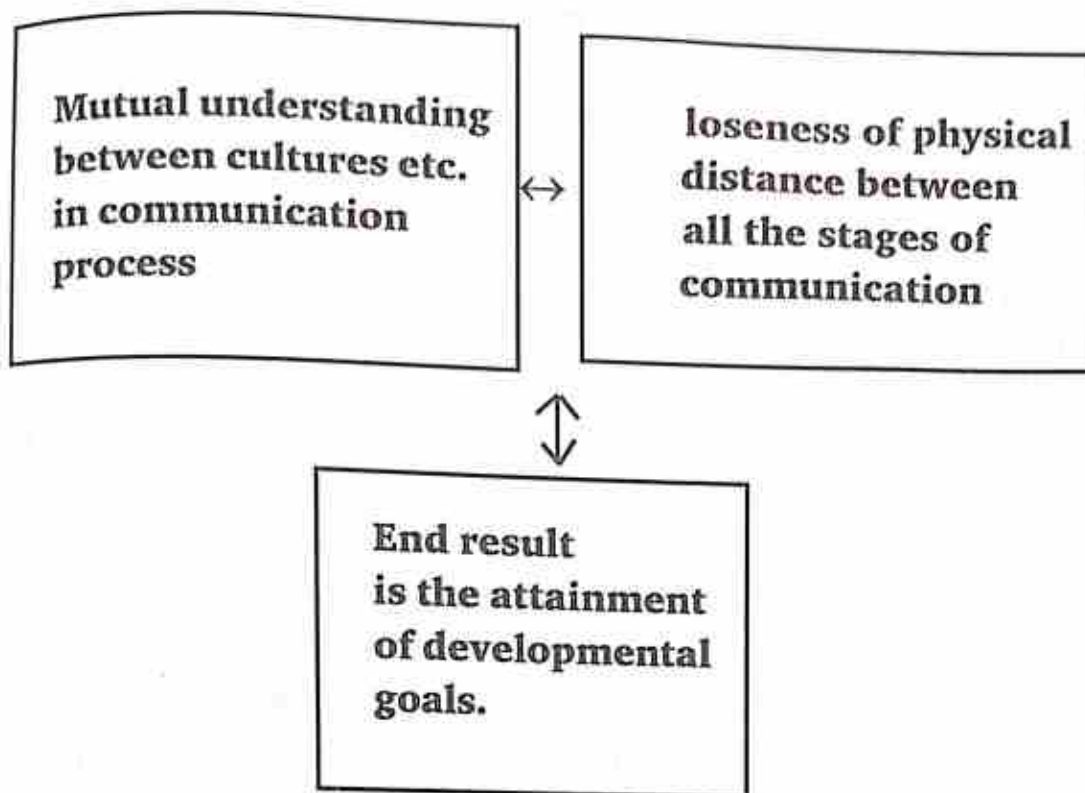
Table: *Development concept of social capital as conceptualized by me*

Proxemics

The anthropologist, Edward T. Hall, is the exponent of proxemics. He believes that "space speaks to us just as loudly as words." The theory of proxemics falls within the non-verbal communication category and considers the socio-cultural norms that dictate proxemic behaviour. It is the importance of space and territory in a variety of culture and in communication.

Proxemics is derived from the Latin term *Proxemus* meaning "nearest". In communication studies, this has to do with how people communicate non-verbally through the use of territory and spatial relationships. In other words, this is personal space and the way we socially perceive it.

Hall had demonstrated in his study that to overcome misunderstandings that occur between cultures, there is a need to understand and follow communication customs on all levels. This then means that, in the context of this study, there should be ample mutual understanding between 'cultures' involved in the communication process for full mutual understanding to take place and a physical close distance or space between all stages of communication, thereby aiding the communication process to achieve its developmental objectives.



*The idea of the proxemics theory for community development goals as conceptualized by me.

Thus, proxemics will allow an individual or people to negotiate cultural barriers more successfully and aid a better understanding of those mechanisms at work in non-verbal communication. This will also help to remove physical barriers of distance. In essence, a person is bound to achieve the ultimate goal in communication (Heath, 2000). Also, the "differing cultural frameworks for defining and organising space, which are internalized in all people at an unconscious level, can lead to serious failure of communication and understanding in a cross-cultural setting." (Brown, 2006).

Habermasian

Jurgen Habermas (born June 18, 1929 in Düsseldorf) is a German philosopher and sociologist. He falls within the tradition of critical theory and American pragmatism. Habermas is popular for his discussions on public sphere and communicative action. His public sphere is a discursive space where open public debate on matters of public importance is carried out by non-exclusionary groups of private citizens, free from the manipulations by formal politics and

market economy (Jacobson and Storey, 2004).

Furthermore, the Habermasian theory on communicative action stresses horizontal and dialogic communication method, which must be "an exercise in the open, undistorted, and non-manipulative speech of public importance". Habermas refers to "concealed strategic action", which is a communication process that is characterized by systematic (conscious and unconscious) manipulation of information towards goals that are not mutually determined by all participants. This he condemns, and argues, is distortion and misuse of the communication process to achieve communication goals (Jacobson and Storey, 2004).

Thus, in his Theory of Communicative Action (1984), Habermas criticized the unfair method of modernization that has ensured economic and administrative rationalization, growing bureaucratic interference in formal systems and a situation whereby political parties and interest groups substitute for social participatory democracy. His public sphere foresees a future of political community that extends beyond the nation-state, and that is "based on ethnic and cultural likeness for one based on equal rights and obligations of legally vested citizens" (Wikipedia, Free Media, 2006).

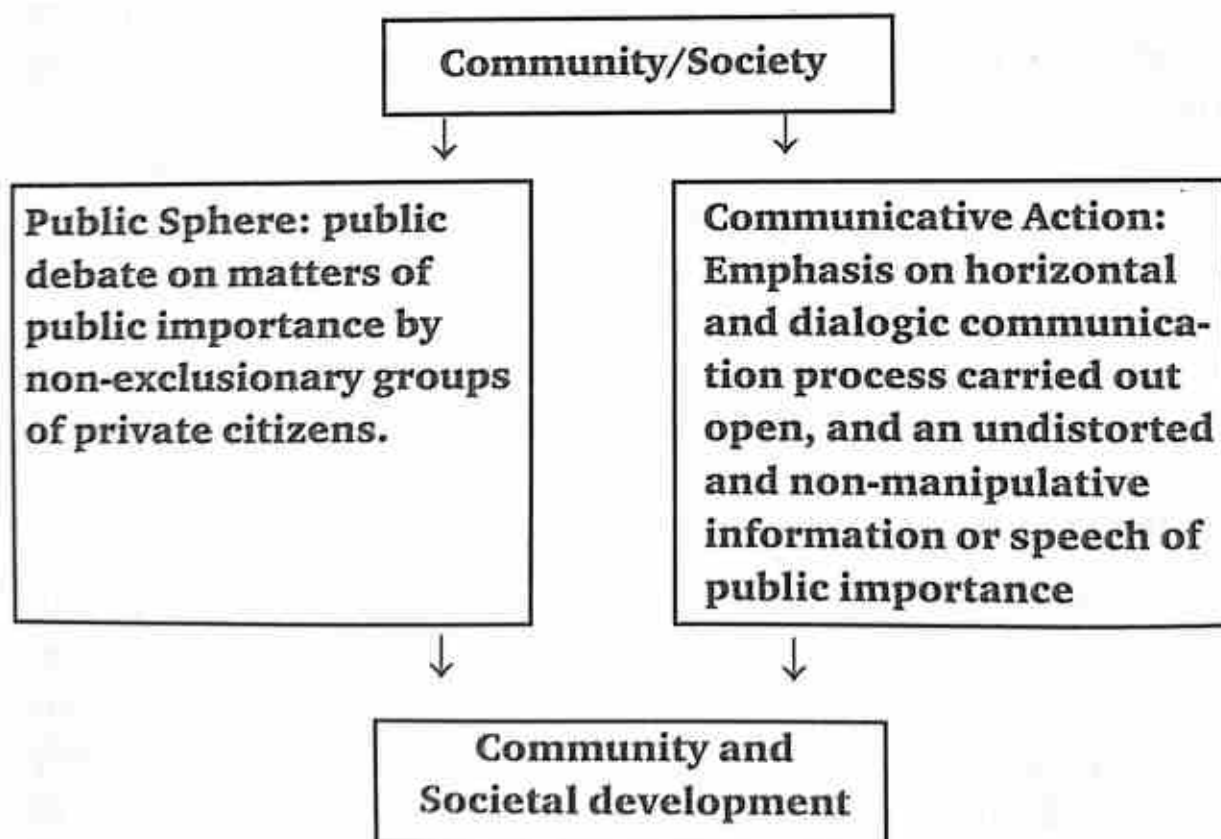


Table: Habermasian Theory's development qualities as conceptualized by me.

The above thus explain why participation is invaluable in any developmental process. The present form of information dissemination whereby some news reporters go out to seek some information, return to the station and have such information edited, reframed, distorted, censored or rejected does not allow for development. What then remains is propaganda and what could be termed as doctored information to the people.

Thus, Salawu (2007) explains, "Community radio will aid understanding of messages being disseminated because the messages are coming in their language." He adds that "community radio will foster the idea of the public sphere," which is the crux of Jürgen Habermas' theory of social communication.

According to a One World publication, access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) "will ultimately enable the people of developing countries increased ability for economic growth and empowerment." The body argued that such access will allow for an increased access to education, which is a means by which people can be educated about their country and "offer greater credibility and support for their researchers and developers and an eventual narrowing of the digital divided."

Examining Residel and the S. P. H. Bridge Model

RESIDEL is a French acronym or contraction that means: *Reseau senegalais d'information sur le development local*.

Residel is a new and an uncommon communication term, and it originates from Senegal, West Africa. It is aimed to develop and 'unblock' or 'unclog' local information, in order to broaden and diversify sources of local information that are accessible to local media, and to develop bigger and improved interactivity both between the media and their natural source of information, and between the media and their public.

RESIDEL: → DEVELOP AND UNBLOCK LOCAL INFORMATION → INCREASED AND DIVERSIFIED INFORMATION SOURCES → INCREASED INTERACTIVITY / CITIZEN PARTICIPATION → SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Residel is intended to develop, encourage and reinforce citizen

participation in disadvantaged local communities, through, and with the help of interactive information on current events, decentralization and development.

Residel as a term can be applied to the S. P. H. Bridge Model. What is the S. P. H. Bridge Model about, and how can it be applied to Residel?

The graphic idea of Residel is as illustrated below: Every society changes over time. While some experience rapid change, others appear to remain unchanged for generations. Why is this so? It is because of the deprivations, restrictions or curtailments that they have experienced in much of their existence as regards access to information that can aid their socio-economic and political development. Information is knowledge and power, and lack of it is retarded development. But in most societies, right of/to access and to disseminate valuable information has been difficult or absent as a result of government monopoly of channels of information, and due to language barriers, among others.

The approach towards emancipation is the introduction of development communication that is espoused through an unfettered or unrestricted media, which will allow citizens entrée to worthwhile information through diversified sources within a local interactive context. This will ensure accelerated change and development. In some cases, change may appear slow, but no matter how slow moving the speed of change may seem, change ultimately occur.

The above explains why the aforementioned theories on communication (Social Capital, Proxemics, and Habermasian) have been examined and adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. They are important in their respective areas of focus as they advocate for positive development, participative and utilitarian media praxis that will serve as catalyst for the envisaged social change and sustainable development.

It effect, the model shall serve as the basis for an in-depth analytical support for the importance of Residel. As they are, the importance and the underlying qualities of the three theories shall be graphically illustrated to reveal their functional nature and interrelationship and will highlight how their union and application can help evolve a model that will serve as a basis for further research and that can also be applied in information development and

dissemination praxis, which, in the near future, could attract more attention and priority over the present or dominant modes of information dispersal process. In essence, a collage of Residel, the Social Capital theory, Proxemic theory, and the Habermasian theory shall be synthesised to enable the evolvment of the S. P. H. Bridge Model, as it is believed that it will evidently aid social-economic and political development.

The letters S. P. and H. stand for:

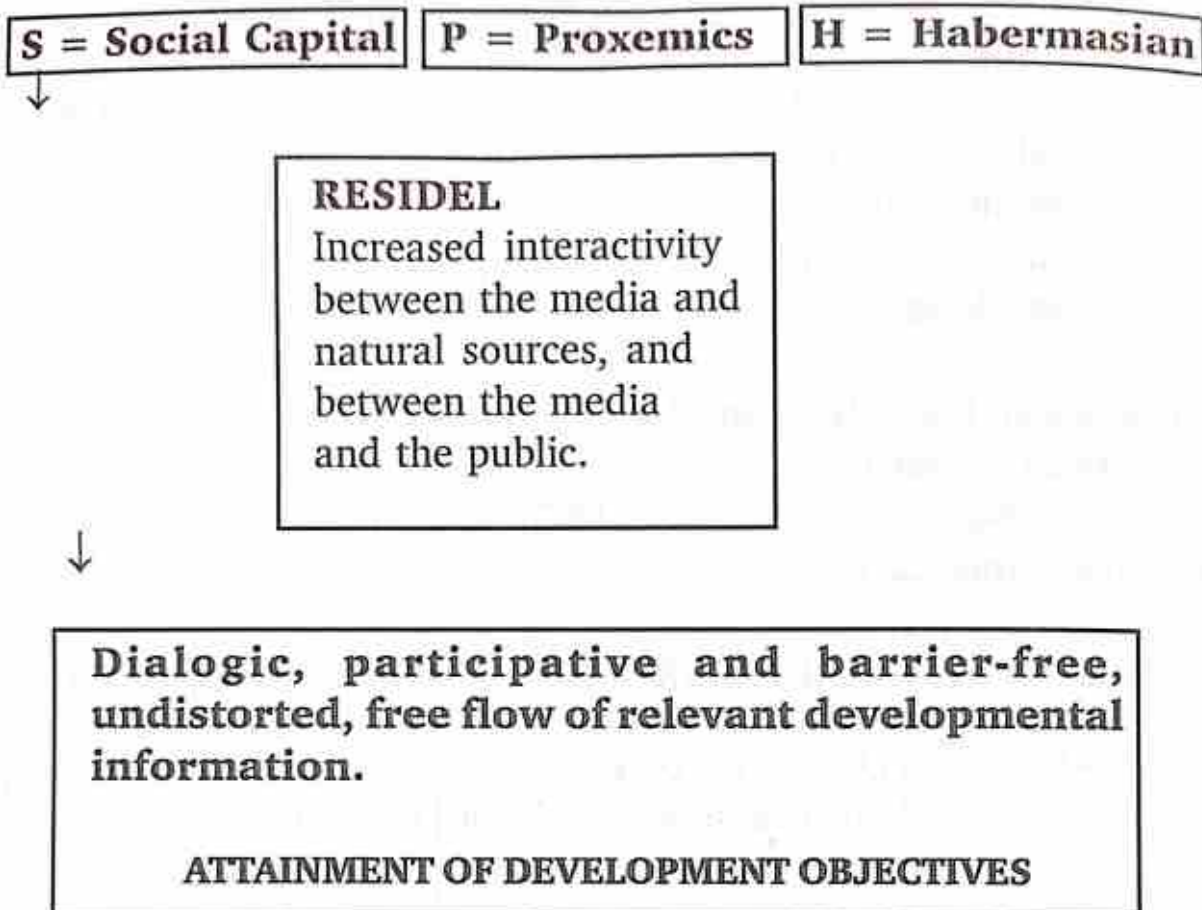
S = (Social Capital)

P = (Proxemics) + RESIDEL = DEVELOPMENT

H = (Habermasian)

THEORY	AIM/PURPOSE	FOCUS/IMPACTS
1. SOCIAL CAPITAL	Developmental approaches, spirit of cooperation that enhances local participation process and distributes benefits equitably.	Spirit of cooperation, mutual trust and a reduced cost of information dissemination.
2. PROXEMICS	Promotes understanding of the individuals, breaks barriers of distance and prejudice.	Closing of divides.
3. HABERMASIAN	Open public debate on matters of societal importance by non-exclusionary groups in horizontal information flow. Removes official and political interference	Enhances good management, administrative breakthroughs, and remove official and bureaucratic bottlenecks.

Table: The process and impacts or focus of the theories.



* Table shows the idea and effects of the synthesised theories

The application of the synthesised S. P. H. theories and Residel is intended to serve as a bridge over the information gulf that exist between disenfranchised people and sustainable development. It is expected that a more potent means of the resultant use of the S. P. H. theories and Residel is when they are applied to the operations of community radio, as it has been proven that community radio, when it is at its optimal operation, is the veritable vehicle of sustainable development because of their qualities.

Conclusion

This study has examined major developmental challenges faced by the Third world countries and the operational constraints of the conventional media. No doubt, the task of development is uphill, and it will require well mapped out strategies in tackling them. The recommendative nature of this study is worthy of note. Major development plans through the use of the media had been designed in the past, but which have not fully yielded the required effects,

and this is an addition to the list. It is hoped that this particular study will be a veritable strategy for media participation that will lead to a permanent era of sustainable development.

The application of Residel and the S. P. H. Bridge Model in the praxis of community radio is to serve as the booster engine that will move the vehicle for the mobility of the peoples, communities and developing nations away from retarded development towards progress.

It should be understood that community radio had been acknowledged as the true means of social development essentially because of its social participative qualities. It has been employed for that purpose around the world, only that, it is believed, it still needed certain impetus to really drive its operations to the required or desired levels. That impetus is the synthesis of Residel and the S. P. H. Model. An infusion of this will also tackle the major plagues of the media; as such inhibitions are suppressed and eventually erased. Information conception or planning, production, presentation and dissemination will be executed from the people's perspective.

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