

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study advocates the role of the mass media in creating increase consciousness, awareness, education and knowledge about environmental issues, problems and challenges in Nigeria. It asserts that man is environment –dependent, as such, there is need for man to be environment conscious. It also advocates a more precise, organized, and purposeful Media approach in creating environmental consciousness in the minds of the populace for national development and sustainability. The quantitative data analysis was employed for this work. The raw data collected from respondents were presented and analyzed using simple percentages. Purposive random sampling technique was employed to select the 50 final students of Mass Communication department in Babcock University, irrespective of their genders and ethnic backgrounds, and 50 from School of Basic and Applied Sciences. The purposive in the sense that, they are knowledgeable and sound to respond to the questions properly and unbiased. Furthermore, the study also suggests multidimensional theoretical application such as: Two- step Theory, Development Media Theory and Agenda- Setting Theory of Mass Communication due to the devastating impacts of environmental pollutions in Nigeria. The study indicated that Mass Media are powerful organ, as such effective use of Mass Media can mitigate the environmental pollution in Nigeria. It concluded that the journalists should challenge the people to become engaged and take ownership of the environmental problems of the society. And, it proposes a guide-dog approach of journalism to environmental issues, problems and challenges for national development.*

KEYWORDS: Environmental Sustainability, National Development, Nigeria, Mass Media

INTRODUCTION

The mass media is a phenomenon whose influence in the life of man and on the society is indispensable; perhaps, if they had not existed, they may not have been indispensable. Their persuasiveness cuts across behavioral, scientific, and evens the environment. This study examines the role of the mass media in bringing about increase consciousness, awareness, education and knowledge about the environment, since man is environment-dependent; there is need for man to be environment conscious, though, there are problems in man’s environment. These problems need urgent attention for the benefit of man and generations. Therefore, there is urgent need of more

precise, organized, purposeful and co-coordinated mass media approach to environmental issues, problems and challenges. The mass media should challenge the people to become engaged and take ownership of the environmental problems of the society unlike the status quo where collective interest is nobody's business.

Betty [2002], defines Mass Media as various means of communication technology such as: television, radio, newspaper, press, news reporting agencies, Internet, movies, mobile devices, video games, etc . The Media is expected to play the watchdog role and be part of the system of checks and balances in the political system. This is as enunciated in the Constitution of the Federal Republic, Section 22 of 1999 which states: "The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibilities and accountability of the government to the people."

MeQuail [1978] asserts that the Media must accept and carry out positive developmental tasks in line with nationally established policies. Freedom of the Media should be open to economic priorities and development needed in the society. Therefore, the issue of environmental pollution is a serious problem which requires attention, because it impinges development and increases human mystery.

The issues of environmental degradation, conservation, protection, sanitation and management now occupy the centre-stage in the corporate growth and survival policies of most business and non-business organizations. This global trend or focus on the environment can be traced to the United Nations Conference on the Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972. It draws attention to the many unfortunate consequences that arise from human and corporate neglect or abuse of the environment, and warned that the environment can no longer be taken for granted, and too that deliberate concrete actions should be taken by individuals and corporate organizations to conserve, protect, renew and maintain a healthy environment for continued human survival, growth and sustainable development.

For instance, in developing country like Nigeria, has established the Federal Environmental Protection Agency [FEPA] and other related environmental sanitation or conservation organization to redirect individuals, groups and corporate entities towards the attainment and sustenance of a healthy environment in the country at all levels. These organizations set guidelines, monitor and check actions and inaction related to environmental preservation or protection. Government has enacted various laws to empower them to carry out these functions as well as to help promote healthy environmental habits among individuals and corporate organizations in the country. Currently more attention is geared towards the Oil and Petrochemical industry in Nigeria, due to the fact that most of the operations of companies that belong to this industry affect the environment in one way or the other. The fact remains that the environmental issue is a value to which people in every country refers, on which public opinion expresses judgments and opinions, and which requires decisions and attitudes from all social classes, governments, enterprises, unions and so on.

One of the valuable proofs of the environment being one of the most universally recognized values, is the United Nations' Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de

Janeiro in 1992, where 178 nations, 118 of which represented by Head of States, could discuss environmental issues; where international agreements could be signed. Another proof is given by the many Green Directives originated by the European Union, in which most of them had already converted into national laws and regulations by the European countries.

All these strategies and policies cannot successfully achieve this objective without total involvement of the Mass Media, been the fourth estate of realm, having the ultimate power for successful creation of environmental consciousness, conservation and preservation in Nigeria and in Africa as a whole.

Concepts Analysis, Definition and Explanation

Agenda Theory

This theory explains that the mass media through their tendentious presentation of events and other kinds of information selected for publication ascribed to such stories and information prominence that such stories become the talk of the town. The underlying effect is that the mass media forces attention to certain issues, they build-up public images of political figures, they constantly present objects suggesting that which all of us think about. In relation to this study, applying agenda setting theory by media workers imply that they will feature news on the environment in such ways that it becomes the talk of the town or provoke public discussion which may influence government to align its programs and policies with the public discussion provoked. It can create environment consciousness and awareness in the minds of people, and at the same time, educate and reinforcing the populace the importance of conduciveness of environment to healthy living.

Two-Step Theory

Schramm [1964] asserts that there is a two-step theory of mass communication where development message flow from the mass media to the local leaders and then to the people themselves [audience]. Onabajo [2002] also contends that the rural broadcasting relies significantly on local leadership to fire the enthusiasm of the people. Thus, Local leaders are the change agents in their communities and other change agents must recognize the pattern and structure of leadership in any community they find themselves. Local leadership fosters participation in the decisions that affects the lives and welfare of the people in the rural communities and creates faith in a number of activities that may lead to rural development.

In this regard, scholars in rural development see local leaders as individuals that influence matters, decisions and opinions in rural communities against formal leadership that characterize authority. Leadership and the community depend on the personal cooperative attitude of individuals within the community and the system of communication in use in a given community. Also the leadership gives common meaning to the aim of a local community effort. It brings vital cohesiveness and infuses consistency into aspects of countless decisions. This makes it paramount for local leaders to be aware continually of rural development as not an end to itself but a means of national development. Therefore, the mass media realizing and utilizing the Local leaders in dissemination of development news is a right step to the right direction, in achieving national development objectives.

Scholars of rural development strategies, observed that the crucial need of rural people is for more practical information, information that will help them improve the productivity of their land, improve the quality of their diet, and allow them to reduce the incidence of disease, in order to adopt a better health practices in their homes by being environmental conscious or oriented. An adage says that a 'healthy people is a healthy nation'.

Development Media Theory

MeQuail [1978] asserts that the Media must accept and carry out positive developmental tasks in line with nationally established policies. Freedom of the Media should be open to economic priorities and development needed in the society Golding [1978], however, enumerates four ways by which African Media can practice development journalism to a successful through the following ways:

- By producing stories which display particular social needs, holding that this would provoke government to action
- By giving prominence to self-help projects, hoping that others would emulate the step
- By emphasizing news that could tackle specific problem and proffer solution.
- And, the rural broadcasting should encourage take into cognizance the needs and problems of the people so as to bring out meaningful development especially on the environmental challenges and problems, corruption, Health, attitudinal change etc.

Consequences of Environmental Pollution

Ajibade, [2003] asserts that pollution is the introduction of contaminants into an environment that causes instability, disorder, harm or discomfort to the physical systems or living organisms. Pollution can take the form of chemical substances, or energy, such as: noise, heat, or light energy. Environmental problems are no respecter of political boundaries; they are varied, and dependent upon how man manages or mismanages his natural resources.

Adegoroye [1997:12-14] opines that environmental problems manifest in various forms and dimensions, and its effects are felt locally, nationally, continentally and globally. He emphasizes that every state in Nigeria across the ecological zones suffer from one form of environmental degradation or the other. Perhaps, the problems range from, erosion due to drought and desertification, gully erosion, flooding, sewage problems, deforestation, agro-chemicals, bush burning, oil pollution, gas flaring and mining waste lands. Others include industrial pollution, vehicle pollution, and noise pollution. Ozone layer depletion, toxic waste, banned and expired hazardous chemicals and so on.

Adeyinka, Bankole and Solomon. [2005] highlighted some critical environmental problems in Nigeria which include:

- Sheet erosion, gully erosion, coastal and marine erosion and land subsidence which occur particularly in the coastal areas.
- Flooding occurs throughout Nigeria in three main form; coastal flooding, river flooding and urban flooding
- Oil pollution from spills, oil well blowout, oil ballast discharges and improper disposal of drilling mud from petroleum prospecting.

- Urban decay and squatter settlements
- Industrial pollution and waste etc.

Social and Health wise: Once the manpower needs of a country is disturbed due to ill health, such a country economy will be adversely affected. Whereby the able bodied men who are supposed to be active, alive and functioning are not, that spells doom for such a country's economy. Besides, countries with environmental problems cannot have a good and sound economy in that, such a country will have to allocate scarce resources to fight the noted problems, once this is done, other areas of economic development such as: savings, investment, trade and human capital would be adversely affected..

Scientific researchers have confirmed that heavy metal poisoning from industrial and vehicle emissions causes various lungs and hearts related diseases which lower life expectancy. Perhaps the greatest negative effect of environment is on health, due to the fact that the urban air pollution from industries and traffics such as pollutant as smoke, sulfur dioxide, sulfur acid, volatile hydrocarbon, nitric oxide, nitrogen dioxide are responsible for innumerable cardiovascular problems in the cities.

Example, in March 2006, there was pandemonium in Lagos due to sudden change in the atmospheric condition of the weather; it became tense and very damp with heavy, thick and darkish-white stinking smoke enveloping some parts of the state such as Lagos Island, Ojota, Ketu, Bariga Mushin and some part of Ikeja. The Nigerian Television Authority [NTA], reported that the smoke was as a result of metropolitan burning of solid wastes at the Ojota dumpsite. The way they reported the issue provoked the public discussion on the issue.

At the political level, it is doubtful if when a country is said to have environmental problem such a country can hardly be politically stable. In all, the impact of environmental problems includes: Unhealthy living, short life span, epidemics, sudden death, poor economy, drought and famine, bleak future, sadness or lack of joy, social disorder, confusion, diseases etc. The problems in the environment are enormous in that there is urgent need for concern.

The Energy Information Administration [EIA], reports that oil spills in the Niger Delta have been a regular occurrence and the resultant degradation of the surrounding environment has caused significant tension between the people living in the region and the multinational oil companies operating there. Since 1960, there have been over 4,000 oil spills in Niger Delta and gas flaring from oil extraction which resulted in serious air pollution and the destruction of economic activities in the region.

One of the most visible consequences of the numerous oil spills has been the loss of economic mangrove trees. The oil spills also had an adverse effect on marine life, which has become contaminated in turn having negative consequences for human health from consuming contaminated sea food, just as agriculture cannot be sustained in the region as result of degradation. The prevalence of cancer in the region was as a result of exposure of lives to oil spills and this has been seriously hindering the economic growth of the region and country in general. The

indiscriminate disposal of toxic substances into the water had resulted into a great loss of various aquatic creatures which serve as a source of living for Nigerian farmers thus increasing the level of poverty of these groups. Even some livestock and domestic birds are also adversely affected, due to the fact that these domestic birds and livestock die for consuming poisonous water thereby reducing the quantity available for sales, leading to low economic return on people's investment.

In 1991 and 2006 census report shows that the industrial activities in Nigeria have been identified as the main contributor to environmental pollution in Nigeria. That about 80 percent of industries in Nigeria discharge liquids, solid and gaseous wastes directly into the environment without adequate treatment that meet the basic standards. The solid waste are disposed of in environmentally insecure dumpsites most of times, while the waste substances are pollutants which cause various environmental problems to the inhabitants and citizens of the country thus reducing the quality of lives which are needed for increase economic productivities and growth.

The result shows that human activities accounts for the major cause of this problem. Human activities occur basically through four ways namely: over exploitation, over-grazing, deforestation and poor irrigation practices. These factors are influenced by other variables such as changes in climate and socio-economic condition. The salient of these inhumane activities had led to the desertification of land in Nigeria. Despite provision for sound environmental control and community development agreements, the exploration of minerals, stones, metal and hydrocarbons still have wide spread environmental and social consequences. These exploration and extraction also pose a lot of challenges to landscape, which is in form of soil degradation, waste water, indiscriminate disposal and water resources depletion. Therefore, pollution can also be the consequence of a natural disaster. For example, hurricanes often involve water contamination from sewage, and petrochemical spills from ruptured boats or automobiles.

The Impacts of Pollution on Human Health

- Adverse air quality can kill many organisms including humans.
 - Ozone pollution can cause respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, throat inflammation, chest pain, and congestion.
 - Water pollution causes deaths per day, mostly due to contamination of drinking water by untreated sewage in developing countries.
 - Oil spills can cause skin irritations and rashes.
 - Noise pollution induces hearing loss, high blood pressure, stress, and sleep disturbance.
 - Mercury has been linked to developmental deficits in children and neurologic symptoms. Lead and other heavy metals have been shown to cause neurological problems.
 - Chemical and radioactive substances can cause cancer and as well as birth defects.
- [<http://www.saching.com>]

The Impacts of Pollution on Ecosystems

- Soil can become infertile and unsuitable for plants. This will affect other organisms in the food web
- Smog and haze can reduce the amount of sunlight received by plants to carry out photosynthesis.

- Sulfur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen can cause acid rain which reduces the pH value of soil and global warming. Etc. [<http://www.saching.com>]

Salu [1993: 70], pointed out that whenever man exists, communication must take place, the communication must be planned. It must be orderly to be effective. For it helps understanding and cooperation. It is clear that the aim of Mass Media in any country, institution or environment is to ensure that all concerned [internal and external publics] have a better understanding of the institution's policies and the modus operandi of executing such policies. Mass Media can educate and "enlighten the publics to accept ideas which could be rural mobilization. Scholars of rural development strategies observe that the rural radio broadcasting is among the rural development strategies that are effective in sensitizing and mobilizing the rural populace in creating awareness and consciousness in their minds. It was also observed that the crucial need of rural people is for more practical information, information that will help them improve the quality of their diet, allow them to reduce the incidence of disease, and to adopting better health practices in their homes.

The landmark case of consciousness in environmental journalism in Nigeria was the dumping of toxic waste in KOKO, DELTA State in 1988. The way and manner the mass media reported the case confirmed the indispensability of the media in upholding and building a sane environment.

In the words of Sandman [1976] 'the goal of environmental education is that of producing a citizenry that is knowledgeable concerning the biophysical environment and its associated problems' However, the facts needs stated that the awareness and knowledge of biophysical environment is not enough, citizens need to be empowered and they need the skill in how to be involved in finding solutions to societal environmental problems for the benefit of the present generation and that of the future. There are four barriers to mass media effectiveness as environment educator: those of news sources, those of news quality, those of publishers influence and those of resources' allocation.

Adenekan [2001] and Salawu [2004] show that the problem is that of loss of general societal interest in general societal problems. This in the main calls for a re-orientation and a new thinking in societal problems and challenges, not only societal progresses, thus, there is need for mass media to review their roles since they have been accepted to be a force in the shaping and reshaping of the society. Mass Media is the ultimate organ for the dissemination of information at the grassroots level for successful national development. Especially, the Public relations and Advertising are known as the adjuncts of Mass Communication, can be used when the issue or campaign needs aggressive mobilization. The Agenda Setting Theory gave an insight of the power of the Mass Media in internalizing certain issues in people's minds as the only issues to talk about. Mass Media is also empowered in section 22 of 1999 Constitution of Republic of Nigeria that enshrined them as the fourth Estate of Realm. Therefore, is an ultimate organ for environmental conservation, protection and its sustainability in Nigeria.

Onabajo [2002] suggests five radio strategies that aid rural and national development such as: radio study groups, radio rural forum, radio schools and radio and animation. He goes on to mention proper use of acceptable language, accessible channels, and as well as involvement of individual

participation which means that rural or national messages should be packaged with the people not for the people, which is the pre-requisite for the achievement of the said objective.

Practical Example:

These practical example authenticate the subject matter of the paper



Source: Source: [www. Wikipedia.com](http://www.Wikipedia.com)

This is the period when pollution began to draw major public attention in the United States between the mid-1950s and early 1970 through the effort of Mass Media the Congress passed the Noise Control Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. Source: [www. Wikipedia.com](http://www.Wikipedia.com)

Mass Media Strategies to Tackle Environmental Issues in Nigeria

Adopting the Pro-Active Philosophy of Public Relations:

Public relations as an adjunct of Mass Media, recognizes that a pro-active approach is the best philosophy for addressing issues that lead to crisis, by using the regular planned and sustained programme of communication which is consistent and persistent in nature. With consistent communication and thoughtful planning, the Mass Media would be better prepared to encounter environmental problems and challenges in Nigeria. They should ensure balanced coverage, accurate account and provides accessible communication channels which discuss and relay the views of the public to the Government verse visa for better understanding.

A Massive Educational and Enlightenment Campaign:

This is aimed at informing, educating and sensitizing the public[s] on the impact of environmental pollution, causes of environmental degradation, devastating activities on our environment and its

effect on human existence etc, using strategic communication which is faced with the challenges of unraveling and simplifying the complexity of environmental issues in order to ensure sound understanding among the stakeholders, using skills of innovation, creativity, adaptability, imagination and decision making.

Identification, Clarification and Prioritization of Environmental Issues:

This is an approach that involves the bottom-up planning process that consists of carrying entire stakeholders along. The stakeholders are those whose interest are affected, those who possess relevant information and expertise, and those who control relevant implementation instruments. All the stakeholders should be invited to join in the planning process. These include: Private individuals, Informal organization, State Government, Institutional organizations, Local government, Professional bodies and international Agencies are also incorporated to focus on several major environmental issues. It will entail providing a forum for discussing of future development, so that there will be effective collaboration through public meetings, consultation and working sessions etc.

Mobilization of Working Group Members

The Working Group should be established to address the prioritized environmental issues. According to the UNCHS, [1996], a working Group [WG] is an international and cross-sectional group established to address any environmental issue of concern, and also be seen as a forum where ideas are generated, resources are mobilized for project implementation and a platform for information sharing. The Setting up of an Independent Monitoring Committee
The committee will keep track of developments, events and records, and to ensure that there are no deviations from the set goals and objectives. The committee will also have the capacity to monitor and set traffic procedures on stakeholders and to sanction any one that deviates.

METHODOLOGY

The likert three scale method of data analysis was used to analyze the data. This technique is a psychometric scale commonly used in information and mostly, in the distribution of questionnaires. It has to do with the sum of responses ranging from: A (Agree), U (Undecided), D (Disagree) found in the three point scale, whereby the respondent of the questionnaire may not be certain about a statement and thus is un-decisive and may tick the space undecided. In analysis of likert's three point scale, a process of coding of the data has to be done. This is to enhance a swift and easier interpretation of data.

	3	2	1	
	A	UD	D	

Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Two sets of fifty questionnaires were randomly distributed to one hundred and six [106] of final year students Mass communication in Babcock University during the class meeting, and School of Basic and Applied Sciences. All the questionnaires were returned giving 100% returned rate. The presentation and the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire was therefore, based on the 50 copies on each set.

Discussion of the Findings and Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Questionnaire for School of Basic and Applied Sciences

		Agree	Indifferent	Disagree
1	There are environmental problems and challenges in Nigeria	50(100%)		
2	Nigeria is free from environmental pollution			50(100%)
3	Nigerian Government makes no effort to mitigate environmental problems[pollution]			50[100%]
4	Nigerian Government does make a lot of efforts to mitigate environmental pollution	30(60%)	5[10%]	10[20%]
5	There are strategies laid down by the Nigerian government to control environmental pollution?	50(100%)		
6	If yes state some of these strategies laid down by the Nigerian Government			
7	State two environmental problems and challenges best known to you in Nigeria			

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Tables 1 in item 1, the 50 respondents representing 100% were of the opinion that there are environmental problems and challenges in Nigeria. Therefore, the study has proved beyond reasonable doubt that there are environmental problems and challenges in Nigeria. In support to item 1 above, items 2 proves that Nigeria is not free from environmental pollution, in which 50 respondents representing 100% disagreed that Nigeria is free from environmental pollution. While, item 3, all the respondents disagreed that Nigerian Government makes no efforts to control or militate the pollution in Nigeria. While, in item 4 proves that Nigerian Government is making effort to militate or if possible to eradicate the environmental pollution for human and national development, though there were mix feelings regard to that.

While, in item 6 the respondents revealed the following efforts or strategies laid down by Nigerian Government to militate the environmental pollution:

- National Environmental Sanitations
- Recycling of Waste in Lagos Western Part of Nigeria
- Reduction in Gas Flaring by Nigeria Liquidized Natural Gas Ltd.
- Establishment of Environmental Protection Agency
- Local and State Government Environmental Commission
- Vehicle Waste Control and Proper Disposal of Waste
- Federal Road Safety Commission

- Reduction on the use of Fossil Fuel

In item 7 the respondents exposed some of the environmental problems and challenges best known to them such as:

- Indiscriminate waste disposal- smelling in littering and blocking drainages
- Oil spillage in Southern part of Nigeria
- Air pollution caused by local individual generators [smoke]
- Water pollution caused by oil mining in southern part of Nig.
- Air pollution from industries
- Global warming or excessive heat
- Erosion and flooding
- Indiscriminate sewage disposal
- Gully erosion in the Eastern part of Nigeria.
- Environmental pollution thru gas emission from industries using generators and vehicles
- Deforestation- uncontrolled cutting of trees without planting back
- Desert encroachment and so on.

TABLE 2: Questionnaire for Mass Communication Students

		Agree	Indifferent	Disagree
1	Mass Media can be used to create environmental consciousness in Nigeria	50(100%)		
2	Mass media do not have power to create environmental consciousness in Nigeria			50[100%]
3	In section 22 of Nigeria Constitution 1999, Mass Media can be said to be a powerful organ	50(100%)		
4	The Agenda Setting Theory of communication proves that mass media have power to create consciousness in the minds of the populace.	50(100%)		
5	Effective use of Mass Media can mitigate the environmental pollution in Nigeria	45(90%)	15[30%]	
6	Mass Media is the Fourth Estate of Realm in Nigeria.	50(100%)		

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Table 2, item 1 reveals that all the 50 respondents representing [100%] agreed that mass media can be used to create environmental consciousness in Nigeria. On item 2 of the table it is revealed that all the respondents disagreed that mass media do not have power to create environmental consciousness in Nigeria. Item 3 shows that all the respondents believed that in section 22 of Nigeria Constitution 1999, Mass Media can be said to be a powerful organ. It is also revealed in item 4 that all the respondents agreed that the Agenda Setting Theory of communication proves that mass media have power to create consciousness in the minds of the populace. Item 5 shows that 45[90%] respondents indicated that effective use of Mass Media can mitigate the environmental pollution in Nigeria. While, item 6 revealed that all the respondents agreed that

Mass Media is the Fourth Estate of Realm in Nigeria, indicating that Mass Media is actual a powerful organ.

CONCLUSION

It is pertinent to know that human degrading and devastating activities on the environment had caused a lot of environmental problems on human existence. In 1991 and 2006 census reports show that about 80% of industries in Nigeria discharge liquids, solid and gaseous wastes directly into the environment without adequate treatment that meet the basic standards. Many nations worldwide have enacted legislation to regulate various types of pollution as well as to mitigate it's adverse effects. But, no matter the kinds of strategies put in place by the Government or the organizations concern without effective utilization of Mass Media would be a waste of effort. Thus, there is a need for the Mass Media to review their roles since they have been accepted to be a force in the shaping and reshaping of the society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends a replacement of the watch-dog role to that of a Guide-dog role. The basis for this recommendation includes that the mass media watch dog role has been interpreted to meddlesomeness by both the government and the governed [Tejumaiye 2004]. Guide-Dog journalism is derived from general disinterestedness of citizens in societal or collective problems. It is a proactive as well as reactive phenomenon to the collective will of ensuring that the society in which we live is made better for all. Guide dogging not only gives the people news and information but also help them do their jobs as citizens. It does not watch the environment, but also actually challenge the people to engage and take ownership of the problems of the society, as well as not to position the people as spectators, but as active participants in the societal problems and successes

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