

Expectations, Realities and the Developmental State Narratives on the Ethiopian Industrial Parks

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Abstract

The current industrialization process in Ethiopia appears to be a state-centric affair. Industrial Park is also the key tool that state authorities have employed to achieve their goals of creating industrialized country. This study aimed to analyze narratives about development, industrial park, labor, and the formation of industrialized country in a socio-political setting that is fragile. To persuade international investors, rural workers and the rest of society, Ethiopian government narratives, as described in its own national media, portray the Hawassa industrial park as a model for other future parks in Ethiopia. Using Hawassa industrial park as a case study, this article examines how industrial park is functions as government narrated and as a site where various hopes come realized. This preliminary research identifies workers have faced various problems such as low wage, unhealthy working conditions and tough city life. Whereas the government attempt to addressing complaints on policy, bureaucracy, and infrastructure, however the voice of the workers are still invisible in national media news and program coverage. Though the government has a goal to transform Ethiopia into Africa's manufacturing powerhouse, I contend that it will not be at the expense of young workers.

Keywords: Industrialization, Industrial park, Discourse, labor, wage and Media

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Introduction

In June 2019 - a peaceful demonstration organized by young girls alone was held in front of the office of the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) president, Hawassa, Ethiopia. Those from various Hawassa Industrial Park (HIP) firms, mostly young and wearing their work uniforms, were enraged. While they went on striking about unsafe working conditions and being exposed to sexual abuses and abduction, yet their primary concern was the issues of low wage. The government representative told to *DW Radio*¹ that the absence of minimum wage standard makes it difficult to respond quickly to valid questions that are raised by employees.

Contrary, for international companies Ethiopia is an attractive business destination primarily due to massive cheap labor. A study of Beatrice et al., (2019: 11) indicates most line workers in the IP are paid less than one dollar a day, around one quarter of the minimum wage in Bangladesh. For the Ethiopian state, the IP is an astounding source of job for the nation's enormous unemployed youth population through creating two million manufacturing jobs, and a pledge for the government's aspiration to achieve rapid and sustainable growth and meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 (FDRE 2010).

As part of this project, several IPs have been built in recent years throughout the whole country. According to Industrial Parks Development Corporation (IPDC), currently 13 IPs are operational across the country provided employment for about 83,000 workers (2022). Meanwhile, the concept of IP can be dated back to the industrial revolution of the 18th century during which countries formed industrial areas to facilitate industrialization. The term 'IP', which is used interchangeably with the term "special economic zones", encompasses a number of interrelated concepts, including Free trade zones, Free ports, Foreign trade zones, Export processing zones, Trade and economic cooperation zones, Special economic zones and Free trade zones (Yannick & Jordan 2014: 4; Ermias 2019: 1).

In the Ethiopian context, the Eastern Industrial Zone (EIZ) in the town of Dukem, the first of its kind for Ethiopia, was built through the China-Africa Development Fund as part of "China Goes Global Policy" (Gifawosen 2019: 32). This industrial zone was initially planned in 2007 and launched in 2009. Then, the Ethiopian IPDC was established in 2014, as one of the public enterprise. Encouraged from government, IPDC is becoming an engine of rapid industrialization that nurture manufacturing industries, to accelerate economic transformation, promote and attract both domestic and foreign investors.

According to Weldesilassie et al., (2017: 10) IPs are key instruments for attracting investment, promoting technological learning, upgrading and innovation, and generating employment, and thereby achieve economic transformation as per the arguments of. For this reason, Ethiopia considers IP development as one of the major policy tools towards industrialization. The IPs also offer the most promising prospect of raising Ethiopia's low manufacturing share in GDP (5.5% of GDP in 2017-18 vs. a Sub Saharan Africa average of 10% of GDP) and low export share in GDP [3.4% of GDP in 2017-18 vs. a Sub Saharan average of 24% of GDP] (Cepheus

Research and Analytics 2019: 1).

Since opening, HIP's 52 units have been already leased out by 18 firms, including PVH, the US owner of brands such as Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger. Mark Green, PVH's Executive Vice President of Global Supply, stressed HIP's importance as a springboard for Ethiopia's textiles and apparel industry at HIP's launch ceremony in 2017 (Mamo & Llobet 2017: 6).

In his interview with AFP² (2020), Raghavendra Pattar, head of Nasa Garment Plc. in Hawassa said, "Ethiopia is the garment future. Everybody's looking at Ethiopia now". Furthermore, Oqubay, the architect of the IP strategy, stated, "We will make Ethiopia the leading manufacturing hub in Africa" (Barrett & Baumann-Pauly 2019). Nevertheless, previous studies on HIP have shown unhealthy working and poor living condition (Salingré 2018; Dagim 2019; Jego 2019), low wage (Mains & Robel 2021), labor relation (Oya & Schaefer 2021) labor right (Gifawosen 2019), inadequate housing (Selamawit 2019), ethnic tension (Barrett & Baumann-Pauly 2019), labor turnover and absenteeism (Fink et al., 2021) are all challenges that workers are facing and making them despair. Specially, due to low wage, absence of workers union and lack of neutral media that transmits the voice of the workers, there is no commitment to resolve their grievances.

In the meantime, through national media (EBC 2019; ENA 2019; South TV 2020; FBC 2021; WALTA 2021), the Ethiopian government and multinational investors have influenced and framed the discourse around IP. Working in IP, according to those narratives, is vital for unwaged youths because of attractive wage, knowledge transfer and better future. Hence, the center of our research, to use Abbink's (2012: 141) expression, is a 'clash of narratives' that flowed among many participants.

Thus, my aim is to examine narratives about IP, employment, gender, wage labor, and the formation of industrialized country in a socio-political setting that is fragile. Ethiopia's government is attempting to narrate only the park's positive aspects in order to attract global textile businesses while also avoiding complaints of its policy, bureaucracy, and infrastructure concerns. In response to regular concerns from employees, communities, researchers, activists, and international journalists, the government is currently working to re-frame or re-construct discourses about IP.

In this paper I ask what motivates the government efforts to re-construct the discourse, as well as and the consequences for workers. To address these research questions I demonstrate the dynamics of industrialization process in Ethiopia. Besides, using HIP as a case study, this article examines how HIP is functions as government narrated and as a site where various hopes come realized. In addition it targets to contribute to study of Ethiopian industrialization by demonstrating how the government used IP as a tool to transform its economy structure from agricultural in to industry. After all, the goal of this study, however, is not to come at a conclusion regarding whether IP helps or hurts employees.

The study is mainly qualitative. Comprehensive literature review, frame analysis, and discourse analysis are used as methods of analysis. It attempts to grasp the expectation and existing living conditions of HIP workers through in participant observation and depth interview that held from 2016 to 2022. By using purposive sampling technique, I conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve HIP workers including four former workers. For the purpose of data triangulation and assessment, interviews were conducted with journalists, government officials from the park, region, city, sub city levels and experts of industrialization and development from Hawassa and Dilla Universities.

Although the bureaucracy made meeting with IP managers difficult, I eventually found them and had a very useful discussion with them that helped me to understand how IP policy implemented in HIP. Moreover, the interview was conducted in the local language, Amharic and Sidaamu Afoo. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed into English in order to make the data usable and accessible for future references to key quotations and themes for analysis. Despite the fact that factory owners refused to participate in the survey, I monitored their opinions through national and international media.

Consequently, secondary data that were collected through a detailed review of documents, journal articles, reports, electronic media, newspapers and credible internet sources are qualitatively interpreted and analyzed.

The Road to Industrialization

Ethiopia has the world's fastest growing, dynamic political setting and most rural population. Its rapid urbanization³ driven by young unemployed, is a huge opportunity, but comes however with substantial challenges. The need for more industry is one of these. The history of industrialization in Ethiopian, however, is not a recent phenomenon. Fanta (2014: 326) noted that modern manufacturing factories were emerged in the country in the 1920s (as of 1927 about 25 were set up mostly by foreigners) though a conscious effort towards developing a modern industrial sector did not start till the 1950s.

Ethiopia has implemented a variety of policies to promote industrial growth over the last three regimes, including the current Prosperity Party's "Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda." Gebreeyesus (2016: 4-5) and Oqubay (2018: 4) stated that they can be characterized as the import substitution and private sector-led (from early 1950s to 1974, the Imperial regime); the import substitution and state-led (from 1974 to 1991, the Dergue

regime), and the export-orientated and private sector-led (post-1991 period, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, (EPRDF)-led government). Therefore, over time shifted the focus to the development of the manufacturing sector (Oqubay 2019: 605).

Since 2004, when policies from the first national development plan, the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP), started to materialize-Ethiopia's economy has boomed. Real GDP per capita increased from US\$214 in 2004 to \$511 in 2016 (Hauge & Jostein 2019: 715). Ever since, Ethiopia's economic development process has been governed by a succession of large-scale government development plans: the SDPRP (2002-2005), the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (2005-2010) and the Growth and Transformation Plans I and II (World Bank 2017).

The objective of GTP I (2010-2015) and II (2015-2020) is to transform Ethiopia into a middle-income country and one of the key pillars for reaching the target is the development of light manufacturing activities. The government believes that these industries can help ease foreign exchange scarcity (i.e. export promotion), absorb labour, and promote economic links with the agricultural sector (Hauge & Jostein 2019: 716). In addition to that, to increase manufacturing sectors minor contribution to GDP, the government has created a new ten-year homegrown economy reform plan (2021-2030), with manufacturing as one of the primary pillars.

Arkebe Oqubay, a special advisor to the Prime Minister, answers the question of how to best sustain economic growth in his book, *Made in Africa*. He is a strong advocate of state-led industrialization in Ethiopia and other African countries. Oqubay explains that "the state in developing countries can and should play an activist and developmental role" (2015).

This kind of role was come to table after advocating a free market economic system for more than ten years in early 2000s. The model of developmental state has no fixed or single definition and it is still debatable among expertise in the area. Nonetheless, the literature in the area has leaned more towards associating the term with the proactive role of a state in the economic development (Bayeh 2014). As Shumuye (2015) adds, the core idea of the developmental state model is that the state should make development agenda its top priority and intervene in the economy to facilitate growth and economic transformation. Hence, the concept is closely associated with the rapid advancement of industrialization and socio-economic transformation through a strong government involvement in the economy.

The doctrine first appeared as an academic work by Ethiopia's late prime minister before being implemented as state policy. In his draft thesis, *African Development: Dead Ends and New Beginnings* (2006), Meles Zenawi describes that the neo-liberal paradigm is not working in Africa and argues the best way to achieve development is the paradigm of the developmental state where the state will have strong power and involvement in directing the political economy of the country.

False Promises and Unfulfilled Dreams

Hawassa, a city located on the shores of Lake Hawassa, is often well known by its various tourist destinations. It is a regional capital of close to five million residents, situated some 275 km from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. Although the city of Hawassa would be familiar for hosting a large number of tourists from all over the world, however, the city has been a source of hope for a variety of actors since the opening of HIP. HIP full operation kicked off in February 2017, is built by a Chinese construction firm for \$250 million. According to the government, HIP alone is expected to generate close to 60,000 jobs and US\$1 billion in export revenues (Mamo & Llobet 2017: 6). At the opening celebration, the former Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn speaking that HIP can be seen as a foundation in Ethiopia's ambition to be the manufacturing hub of the African continent. Together with massive investments in roads, hydroelectric dams, and other forms of infrastructure, the IP is a key component of Ethiopia's plan to maintain economic growth and become a lower-middle-income country by 2025 (World Bank 2019).

When HIP built in 2015-2016, I was a journalist in SNNPRS Mass Media Agency. Interestingly, it's headquarter is located near HIP. This close working relationship enabled me to form intimate bonds with a variety of young workers and park supervisors. Meanwhile, government officials argues the IP is the key tool that Ethiopian officials have employed to achieve their hopes of creating a \$30 billion apparel and textile industry, and the HIP is the first step in advancing this model. Similar to the high expectations that mentioned above, several developmental and industrialization narratives were circulated among government, global investors, local populations and NGOs. In this article, I have outlined four major actors who have dominant narratives about IP in recent years, i.e., the state, industrialists, media and workers.

Selam Genemo, 22, and her four house mates had been living Hawassa for the past one and half years. When government representatives move from their village to village, sharing stories of wealth and comfort with possible workers, Selam and her neighbors didn't hesitate to join the park. As Selam explains:

The government representatives assured us enthusiastically at the Kebele (the lowest administrative level) meeting hall that the salary would be more than 3000 Ethiopian Birr (EB), housing would be available, and the work environment would be quite comfortable (Interview, February 2020).

Young women arriving in Hawassa on busses from around the region became a common sight in Hawassa after the IP opened. They carried small bags, plastic water bottles, and cheap mobile phones. A former HIP worker recalls what it was like to arrive in Hawassa:

We were unable to purchase basic materials due to a lack of money such as; blankets, sheets, and food. Because of the promises we received from officials, we expected a lot in Hawassa when we left our houses (Interview, May 2021).

A consistent pattern emerged from my interviews, women in rural areas and small towns finished school, often leaving after grade 8 or 10. They are unable to get formal job due to landlessness, lack of enough income, departure from higher education and other socio political issues. Furthermore, their expectations would be high if they hear the most sensational advertisement by recruiters promising them big income, safe working conditions, and pleasant housing. When they started working at the HIP, however, they discovered conditions that were far from what they had anticipated. The gap between expectations and realities certainly increased the level of employee turnover as workers left the IP when their expectations were not met.

When I interviewed such girls in 2019, they only received 650 EB or (£17) for working eight hours a day, six days a week. The company didn't provide not food or housing. Thus, youths come from the countryside for better jobs, and then because of unable to survive in city life, they start begging their families for money. Meaza, is a mother of two who spent Six month while working in Hawassa's IP asserts that "due to its low wage living in a big city has become insufferable". However, the salary complain doesn't come only from those who come from rural are, however the Hawassa residents were felt similar. One identified girls expresses:

Still I am living with my family. I can't be free. The wage is not enough to liberate from my family. (Interviews, January 2018, August 2020, and June 2021).

In the meantime, the entry-level salaries for workers in Ethiopia's textile industry are lower than Bangladesh's minimum wage of \$68 per month and far below the average wage of \$500 in the Chinese textile sector (Gifawosen 2019: 46). In fact, due to Ethiopia's high unemployment rate, workers are usually forced to accept inadequate wages. There is no set minimum wage in Ethiopia in the private sector, only in the public sector which is 420 birr (\approx \$22) per month. In case of HIP, the entry-level workers are paid an average basic wage of US\$26 a month, which is only 40% of the average per capita income in the country and which does not cover the worker's basic needs (Barrett & Baumann-Pauly 2019: 4).

For many young women, therefore, frustration over their pay, strange working time combined with loneliness and other unfavorable aspects of city life, has led to a sense of alienation and lack of commitment to working productively. Therefore, the wage issue is too critical. One respondent stated that employers should be thanking the government as it allows them to get labour almost for free (Gifawosen 2019: 47). It is not sufficient at all.

On the other hand, Ethiopia's government, in particular, advertised the availability of extremely cheap and comparatively skilled labour frequently in order to attract more international investment. "I don't like this term, 'cheap labour,' the Public Relations representative for the HIP told us. He was not alone. *Rikash gulbot*, Amharic for cheap labour, is a key term in local discourses about the industrial park. For Hawassa residents the term is a major source of resentment (Mains & Robel 2021: 2). Among the critics is Barrett & Baumann-Pauly, puts Ethiopia at the bottom of a list of countries in the textile and garment sector with an average wage of \$26 a month (2019). Their report, which looked at factories in Ethiopia's HIP, the country's biggest, says international brands are benefiting from the misery of workers who cannot afford to live on these wages but want jobs.

When HIP inaugurated, most of Hawassa's and neighbor cities resident expected that the salary of workers would be high. Those inhabitants were also curious to work at HIP and imagined that how their life dramatically changes. I assume that this high level of expectation come from the government's ongoing media publicity about IPs. Many news coverage and advertisements have been broadcast repeatedly through regional and national media. Presidents and other senior officials from countries such as Eritrea, Liberia, Kenya, Somali land and Rwanda have also visited and spoken about the benefits of HIP for youth on numerous occasions. As a result, people's perceptions of the park improve over time. Birehane Belachew, 23 was come from Sidama zone.

From the first minute, when we heard about HIP, we were curious to be part of this industry. Unfortunately, for the past one year we have experienced the opposite (Interview, May 2018).

Before coming in to HIP the government representative promised many things for recruited girls. That's why many workers had high expectations for their working environment, housing, food and transportation yet the reality was much opposite. The park, the city, the work, the culture, the weather, the food and others are very unfamiliar for them. Hence, they felt loneliness. Silva & Lankathilake (2016) recommends that there is a relationship between health status among inhabitants and the living conditions in houses. If the health status of industrial worker affected by uncomfortable boarding houses, it may create vital impact on the production and on the income of the country.

Peter Wan, from the Chinese company of Wuxi Jinmao, have concerns about low productivity by

employees unfamiliar with factory work. As he suggests to the guardian (2017) the workers here are not hard working. And they are slow to learn.

Wuxi pays a minimum of 1,100 birr per month. The recruits need training, but with inadequate housing and transport, he's worried about a high turnover of staff as the rapidly rising cost of living eats into pay packets.

The greatest struggle that women faced was with housing. Within one 4X4 dorm which was built by government yet run by private land owners, four girls was lived. They have pays 1000 EB per month. This account for 38% of their monthly income and workers find it too expensive (Jego 2019: 62). This very narrow house has no kitchen, bedroom, reading room and other important additional room. Thus, they are sleeping on floor, cook near their mattress, playing on their bag and boiling coffee in front of their food materials i.e., potato, onion, tomato and greens. One resident told us "It doesn't appear to be a real home, yet it is a prison house". Some of the young women quickly move on when they are able to find cheaper housing.

Because of the current high cost of renting a home in Hawassa, many workers are relocating from the city center to *Dato*, which is situated on the outskirts of Hawassa. It also exposed them to a variety of problems, including long-distance walking, beat, theft and rape. In an interview with Ethiopia News Agency, former CEO of IPDC and then Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC) commissioner Lelise Neme said that one of the critical challenges for IPs development is the shortage of house surrounding the park (2019).

To address the housing shortage, Cornerstone Development Group (CDG), a private developer, plans to construct a 600 million Ethiopian Birr dormitory in Hawassa. Ethiopian Monitor (2021) reported that the groundbreaking ceremony was held on September 14, 2021. The Workers' dormitory will have capacity to house 6,500 local workers of the IP, says the developer.

Back to Home: Unemployment and Turnover

Because of low wage, challenging working and living conditions, turnover has become a normal activity, particularly in HIP. Hardy & Hauge (2019: 730) agrees that the investors and managers were nearly unanimous in describing turnover as the most common and costly labour issue for firms in the textile and leather industries. For instance, recent studies on the expanding manufacturing industry in Ethiopia document labour turnover rates of around 80–100 per cent annually (Barrett & Baumann-Pauly 2019; Halvorsen 2021). One HIP worker explained that "I am tired here in HIP, and I expect something miracle that departs me from this IP". Her three close friends from the same remote area have also back to home, she said. Mains & Robel (2021: 7) describes that this is a direct contradiction to the view of HIP administrators that wages will increase when productivity increases.

At June 2019 interview, a representative from the EIC that manages the park explained that he is not worried about employee turnover. "The salary should be low because workers arrive without knowledge or skills," he argued.

He added that no companies have left. In contrary they expect more to come because the government is ready to support them in every way possible. But to support companies the EIC also had to continually attract workers and convince them to stay on the job. Another government administrator who was involved in recruiting workers confirmed that young women were promised high salaries, regular meals, and frees housing. Not only do these false promises create high worker turnover, they undermine companies' access to future workers. I argue high turnover rates in the textile industry may have an impact on the Ethiopia's long-term aim of being industrialized.

Framing the Narratives

News media is a key source of the public's information on social, political and economic issues. Nowadays, there are various communication theories that describe how information is conveyed and received. I used that framing theory to examine how national and international media outlets produce news. Journalists select the topics they will present and decide how they will be presented. This determines the issues audiences think about and how they think about them. The basis of framing theory is that the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning (Goffman & Erving 1974; Fairhurst, G. & Sarr, R. 1996; Dietram A. 1999). Consequentially, because the media determines what we see and how we see it, they also influence how we understand and interpret information.

In the context of HIP, media coverage plays a powerful role in shaping and reinforcing how the public think, understands and explains about the relationship between IP issues and their life. I argued that Ethiopia's government is attempting to narrate the positive side o of IP in order to attract global textile businesses while ignoring complaints of its policy, bureaucracy, and infrastructure concerns. In response to regular concerns from employees, communities, researchers, activists, and international journalists, the government is now working to reshapes HIP discourse. I have noticed a few changes, such as the establishment of a new FM radio station within HIP and the organization of a "*Bunna Tetu*" (Drink Coffee) project in partnership with various NGO's,

HIP's active participation in community service, frequent visits by country leaders and national celebrities and so on. The FM radios, as well as the *Bunna Tetu* project, are key activities for shaping the perception of investors, workers, and society who live around the park.

Firstly, a recent activity which is known as *Bunna Tetu*, it provides a specific platform for promoting social dialogue in HIP. These include awareness raising, empowering girls, and creating linkages for access to medical and legal aid services. In addition, according to CARE, an international NGO and one key partner, the project promotes regular social dialogue sessions between workers and key duty bearers as well as bring stakeholders together to support the resolution of disputes where needed.

Yes, the Amharic phrase of *Bunna Tetu*, which literally means "Drink coffee," refers not only to the act of drinking coffee but also to the act of socializing with people during a coffee ceremony. The coffee ceremony was initially seen in Ethiopia as a new and indigenous approach to raising HIV awareness. In its national prevention strategy, Anteneh (2011: 124) describes the Ethiopian government promotes the coffee ceremony as a means of preventing the spread of the virus. Regarding HIP, officially starts in July 2021, the *Bunna Tetu* project aims to be creating an access that women exchange their ideas including best experience and challenges.

As I observed, the conversation, which was held by twelve females⁵, focused mostly on the challenges that women factory employees experience. Many girls were still shy, and they barely listened for half an hour. A few women routinely bring up difficulties like the new working culture and very low pay. Over a cup of coffee, the participants discuss their experiences and express their concerns with the guidance of an NGO representative. Though the project provides an avenue for workers to express inquiries, it lacks in terms of giving a direct and timely response by authorities as much as possible. The women are enthusiastic about the discussion, but they also believe that their problems are more serious than those addressed by the project.

Those NGOs including IPDC, believe that through awareness creation and providing empowerment training, the women's problem decrease gradually. Workers' questions, on the other hand, have become more convoluted over time rather than being resolved. Because of those NGOs and government representatives those who framed the notion of workers, there are insufficient appropriate and responsible bodies to listen the voice of vulnerable workers. Workers frequently seek structural and policy responses to questions like minimum wage and safe working conditions.

Secondly, before delving into the specifics of media narratives, I would want to share some background information on the HIP community radio station. Established in 2018 by EIC, it has been operational for the past four years. It broadcasts for 63 hours a week (9 hours per day) and runs usually music and few programs, of which are pre-recorded. The station's manager says that its transmissions have reached the entire city of Hawassa as well as the surrounding rural area. Currently, it is broadcasting in Amharic language.

It was assumed that HIP community radio station FM102.4 serves informational, educational, and entertaining needs that are not met by commercial, other private, and government broadcast services. Nonetheless, for the past few years, the station has mostly served as a government communication tool, with staff members also serving as public relations experts. Because the journalist's salary comes from the EIC, they prioritize the interests of government policy and strategies.

The park workers argue that the station does not represent their interests and that they do not have enough space to air their concerns about working conditions, tough city life, harassment, and wage issues. In addition, a former journalist claims that the government utilized the station to show to investors how serious it was about creating a favorable climate for them and workers. Though community radios play an important role by providing a public platform for the advancement of workers' social, economic, and political agendas, however I observed HIP community radio has struggled with a problem which related to high government interference and lack of professional skills.

As a result, the Ethiopian government is working hard to promote HIP as a model and exemplary park among foreign investors and the general public. As a pioneer and huge park in the country in terms of number of workers and export potential, however officials in every stage have no readiness to hear and see the various problems that related to HIP. That manner, it focuses solely on the positive aspects of public relations and promotion through the media and other channels.

In terms of national and international media coverage, I outlined two major news and program angles which dominates the media platform i.e., wage and export. The former issue, wage, is often a headline for international medias (BBC 2018, the guardian 2017, Reuters 2020, AFP 2021). In his interview with AFP, Zemen remembered that he would left farming behind and found the ticket to a better life when he began a job in a clothing company at a massive industrial park in Southern Ethiopia. However, the 22-year-old ended up quitting within months, weary of working eight hours a day, six days a week and still not making ends meet earning \$35 a month. As Zemen explains managers were so strict they would go into bathrooms and yank out workers deemed to be taking too long. His supervisor would loudly berate him as "slow" and "lazy" when he failed to keep pace on the production line, he told AFP. "After I joined the company, I suffered... the supervisors treat you like animals" he added.

Another international news provider institution, Reuters (2020) reported that garment workers, mostly women, are the lowest paid in the world. As expert mentions;

"The fact that these workers are being paid such miserable wages ... really enhances their vulnerability to hunger, to other forms of labor abuses."

Meanwhile, few national media such as Addis Standard and Addis Fortune have also covered the cause and consequence of low wage. For instance, Addis Fortune (2019) provides a feature report about how low wages cast shadow on IPs (Published on May 25, 2019 [VOL 20, NO 995]).



Picture 1, Addis Fortune's feature page (Source <https://addisfortune.news/>)

Tizita Eyamo was hired nine months ago by IndoChine Apparel, one of 21 operational companies in the park engaged in manufacturing pairs of jeans for global brands like Wrangler and Levi's. She suggests that "the amount I earn has been growing, but it is still not enough to cover my monthly expenses for food, rent and to support my family," says Tizita. "I am forced to ask for help from my father." Similar grievance has risen from another park worker, Meaza, is a mother of two who came from rural kebeles around Dilla city in SNNPRS She told to Addis Standard (2021) reveals living with such an insignificant salary is challenging for her and her colleagues. She points out the cost of living in a big city has become unbearable.

The second media narratives are concern on export. Particularly, national media channels that controlled by the government, were gave priorities for the various advantage of HIP. Such media like FBC, EBC, WALTA, AMN and few Chinese news corporations repeatedly gave wide coverage issues related to revenue. For example, in 2020, HIP has secured 114 million \$ from the mask export during last Ethiopian budget year. Moreover, according to CGTN (2021) the Ethiopian government has previously disclosed its plan to generate close to 1 billion U.S. dollars in annual revenue from the park once it starts operations at its full potential. In addition, the Chinese government television network describes that as part of its efforts to make the country a light manufacturing hub and lower-middle income economy by 2025, the East African country hopes its plan to build and commission a total of 30 industrial parks within the same period.

Not just conventional media, but also social media, flyers and billboards are used as to spread the good news about HIP. For example, "Our Park, a place where I found acquaintance," says the billboard below.



Picture 2, Source: HIP investors association (2021)

Whether intentionally or unintentionally, the billboard's creators have displayed two contradicting messages in a single shot. The first two amusing girls express how glad they are to be members of the park. However, behind the girls, one girl is serious and looking at the camera. HIP is a place where different imaginers collide, as evidenced by this billboard.



Picture 3 - Three Amharic messages have posted in this billboard. 1- Our park (first line left side billboard) 2- The park helps me in developing my skill (second and third lines of the same billboard) 3- The hands that made the country proud.

Source: HIP investors association (2021)

The public's opinion of HIP has shifted in recent years, particularly among workers and the general public. The concept of "Our Park" is a recent activation of the design in response to the continued high turnover and low

salary question. Previously, there was a strong sense of belonging and hope among the society on the park. However, there are some questions about its impact at the moment. We assume the administrations and investors are aware of this mindset and are working to change or divert it in a constructive direction. As a result, "Our Park" is a new rhetorical phrase that fosters worker ownership.

Despite the fact that the story of IP has become huge news and has societal impact, certain issues are only raised by the media institution. As I analyzed four national and four international media's text, the former usually focuses on opportunities, while the latter is concerned with HIP difficulties. Notwithstanding a few investigation reports, the majority of the media coverage on what appears to be a promotional job for IP's and the government. Western media, on the other hand, have focused on the workers perspective.

A Shifting Discourse

HIP's five years theoretical and empirical experience reflects the operation of long-term economic, socio-cultural and discourse are gradually shifting. Behind this narrative, there is a more complex set of historical and political processes involved in establishing IP, attracting FDI, mobilizing labour force and convincing the host community. Since the historic elections of 2005, the ruling party, the EPRDF, has taken lessons and began to shift its focus to pro-poor policies and address youth unemployment that was rampant in the cities (Tsegab 2021: 29).

As the neo-liberal market economy is labeled negatively as rent seeking, jobless youths attempt to strike in many parts of the country and mass criticisms came from opposition party, TPLF/EPRDF claim to have resorted to the developmental state as the only means of economic development in the country (Semahagn 2018: 126-137). As Abbink (2011: 598) adds the developmental state rhetoric is now in full swing in light of the huge foreign land-lease deals, exaggerated growth figures, the mega-dam building and the road construction.

Since then, the Ethiopian leaders and regional high ranking government officials have been always happy to point to the narratives about Ethiopian prosperity, which is centered on the big dam, sugar factories, national recreation centers, IP and so on. No doubt these industries are promising in terms of enhancing the country's economy and changing the livelihood standard of the society. In micro level, IPs have also brought benefits such as enhanced infrastructure, creating additional small industries for people living nearby them, and the social connection between people of different culture becoming easier. Nevertheless, it would be a cause of increasing social instability.

For instance, in the context of Kombolcha Industrial Park, Ethiopia, Aspen & Bedemariam (2021: 653) explains how projects have affected highly productive farmland. The expansion of IPs has an impact not just on rural or migrant worker, but also on each household that lives near these parks. Therefore, it is reasonable to express concerns about how the industrialization process isn't working as the government claims. However, in the context of HIP, a vital tool that takes the country in to industrialization and modernization, it is a place where various imaginations contradict. State based discourses in terms of cheap labour, reproductive health, harassment, working conditions and safe living conditions, I argue that, should be redefined from the worker's perspective. Workers at the park experiencing the opposite of what the government tells in the media. When workers try to speak out about exploitation, low wage and different types of harassment that implemented by park middle supervisors and managers, they find that there is no open channel or responsible body that listen their inquiries and respond appropriately.

Furthermore, to make the industrialists happy, government officials have been hiding the critics about HIP, and often display the positive side of it. The state has a political and financial interest to keep multinational companies from enforcing their weakness about handling workers. Therefore, by implementing such projects such as establishing FM and practicing *Bunna Tetu* ceremony, the government attempts to shift the discourse of industrialization. While the IP officials painted the park as a workers' park in theory, this is not the case in practice.

These findings suggest that Ethiopia's industrial growth is falling short of its goal of functioning in a transparent and responsible manner. I supposed that Ethiopia's dream of becoming an industrial nation will not only come true if international investors are pleased. In other words, the employees' graveness must be regarded seriously, and they require comprehensive responses. In order to settle workers' questions and re-store their hope, the government should re-examine its policies and seek out other solutions.

Conclusion

The term "Industrial Park" is now a very commonly used term under Ethiopian industrial policy. In this article I have presented four major actors and their discourse on HIP, Africa's largest IP. For international companies, Ethiopia is an attractive business destination primarily due to the nation's massive cheap labour. For the Ethiopian state, the industry park is an astounding source of job for the nation's enormous unemployed youth population through creating two million manufacturing jobs. For the young women, who would move to Hawassa from countryside to take jobs in the park, the park is a possibility of a steady job. Government

discourses, as described in mainstream media, portray the park as a blueprint for other future parks in Ethiopia, reinforcing imaginaries of the powerful. However, I suggest that workers faced a number of difficulties, as discussed in the previous section, the government should reconsider the discourse from the employees' perspective as well.

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Note

1-DW 2019

<https://www.dw.com/am/%E1%8B%A8%E1%88%80%E1%8B%8B%E1%88%B3%E1%8A%A2%E1%8A%95%E1%8B%B1%E1%88%B5%E1%89%B5%E1%88%AA-%E1%8D%93%E1%88%AD%E1%8A%AD>

2- AFP 2020 (<https://www.france24.com/en/20200204-angry-workers-spurn-ethiopia-s-industrial-revolution>)

3- In 2021, urban population for Ethiopia was 22.2 %. Over the last 50 years, urban population of Ethiopia grew substantially from 8.9 to 22.2 % rising at an increasing annual rate that reached a maximum of 2.44% in 2008 and then decreased to 2.21% in 2021 (World Atlas 2021).

4- A map of Ethiopia's industrial parks can be found at

<http://www.investethiopia.gov.et/index.php/investment-opportunities/other-sectors-of-opportunity/overview.html>

5- The numbers of the participant is varying.

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