The Use of Theories of Change

in Media and Governance Programmes

Final Report to SDC

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Bibliography

I. Introduction

The unit on democratisation, decentralisation and local governance (DDLG) within the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) is in charge of this thematic domain, as well as of governance as a transversal theme, and of political economy. It is responsible for enhancing thematic quality of respective SDC programmes, for animating knowledge management and joint learning within the DDLG network, for developing SDC policies and positioning SDC at a global level.

As part of the collaboration between SDC/DDLG and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex, Brighton, the Institute of Applied Media Studies (IAM) of Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Winterthur, has been mandated to produce a review and an analysis of the Theories of Change used in the fields of Media and Governance. The analysis should look at Theories of Change used by SDC and by Fondation Hirondelle, one of the main organisations in Switzerland working in media support in post-conflict countries. In addition, the Theories of Change used by other international donors or implementing organisations should be investigated and compared to insights stemming from academic empirical research on media effects in the field of governance.

Based on this review, conclusions should be drawn with the aim of enabling donors to improve their decision-making on strategies in future programmes on governance with media components. The review should also help to understand more clearly, how media support projects work, how they aim to achieve their objectives on various levels, and how to develop meaningful indicators and conduct insightful evaluations in the future.

II. Research Questions

The review was planned on one hand as being open for any kind of observations emerging from a comparison of the documents, but on the other hand to be conducted under the following specific research questions:

RQ1: What layers of the media sector are usually chosen in the Theories of Change (for example: journalists, media organisations, legal environment, media economics)?

RQ2: Are there specific associations in the Theories of Change; for example between media and elections, or media and decentralisation, or specific media-related objectives within the governance area; for example, transparency, participation, or dialogue?

RQ3: Are there specific differences in Theories of Change between SDC and other donors or implementing organisations?

RQ4: What are the differences between the Theories of Change used by donors or implementing organisations and the research evidence from academic literature?

RQ5: As a conclusion, is it relevant to develop a holistic Theory of Change for the media environment or, more relevant, to create specific Theories of Change; for example, according to specific objectives (democratisation, civic participation, anti-corruption, peace) or according to layers within the media sector or the governance area?

III. Methodology

The following methods were used to conduct the review:

- o **Qualitative content analysis** of programme and project documents, analysing them according to research questions, but being open to discovering other aspects
- o **Screening of academic literature** from empirical studies about media effects on items relevant for governance, such as political interest, knowledge or participation
- o **Interviews** with staff from SDC or FH, responsible for planning and conducting media and governance programmes in selected countries, on the questions of what role the Theories of Change played during project execution.

Sample Material

The review is based on project documents (evaluation studies, project proposals and descriptions incl. Logframes) from development cooperation donors and implementers from 2011 to 2018, on the topic of media/journalism and governance. Documents about programmes working with the "communication for social change" approach were excluded on purpose, because they usually do not work with news journalism and they want to achieve behaviour change in health, agriculture, or education, and not in governance. The majority of the documents came from SDC and Fondation Hirondelle (FH). Other donors and implementers were invited to provide the researchers with additional documents, but not all of them were willing to comply with the request[1].

In sum, the research used

- o 15 country-specific programmes from SDC (media and governance), used in the CapEx study[2]
- o 18 project descriptions from Fondation Hirondelle (the majority of those documents were used in the CapEx study)
- o 6 programmes from the Deutsche Welle Akademie
- o 5 evaluation studies from BBC Media Action
- o 12 programme documents from Free Press Unlimited
- o 1 overall Theory of Change graph from Internews
- o 140 articles from academic journals and books, dealing with media effects on governance outcomes, but only articles containing empirical results were used (see bibliography in Annex). Therefore, many reports from grey literature did not fit, as they did not test media effects empirically, but only asserted potential effects.

IV. The concept(s) of Theory of Change

The concept of "Theory of Change" gained momentum in the 1990s, especially as a means to evaluate complex interventions, for which the usual Results Frameworks, based on Logframe models, did not work well. Weiss (1995) argued that a key reason why complex programmes are difficult to evaluate is that the assumptions were perhaps poorly articulated, and that stakeholders of complex initiatives were unclear about how change processes unfold and therefore paid little attention to the intermediate steps that lead to achieving long-

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[1] For example project documents from Internews and IREX could not be integrated

[2] Mary Meyers, Nicola Harford, and Katie Bartholomew: SDC's Media Assistance: Final Report of the Capitalisation Exercise, June 2017

term goals. Therefore, a Theory of Change should (a) make stakeholders more aware of their (hidden) assumptions, and (b) make it easier to monitor those intermediate steps in evaluation[3].

Consequently, the Theory of Change process according to Weiss consists of identifying in detail the steps that lead to a desired change, and thus overcoming the rather general connections between outputs, outcomes and impacts in logical frameworks. Evaluation of whether the expected steps and intermediate results were actually achieved can be tracked at a later point. Accordingly, some stakeholders in the development community speak of "result chains" to describe the various steps that lead from activities to outcomes and impacts.

SDC (2018) differentiates three understandings:

- o **Narrative model**: this is an impact hypothesis that describes in one or two sentences how the specific intervention being planned is intended to work
- o **Causal model**: a detailed description of the causal chain to show how change happens
- o **Overview model**: this is a visual product, often a causal pathways diagram, depicting the proposed impact pathway or chain of influences.

Of those three, only the second understanding corresponds with Weiss' original result chains concept. The other two (narrative and overview) are very similar to the Logframe, as they summarise in prose or graphics what has been laid out in the Logframe section of project proposals. Valters (2014) confirms:

"As a tool, for many, Theory of Change is like an extension of the assumptions column of the logframe. If developing Theories of Change is to be useful here, it will be part of a critical and evidence-based attempt to unpack the black box of causality between what (in aid jargon) are termed inputs, outputs and outcomes."

In our view, the narrative and overview understandings do not provide anything essentially new compared to the results framework[4], as both are based on participatory discussions with project partners, stakeholders and target groups during the planning process. In contrast, the causal or result chain oriented understanding of Theory of Change provides new information and discloses assumptions that are not known from the Logframe.

The three models can also be interpreted as complementary, with the main differences being found in the details. The narrative model is the overarching one (with little detail, if any), then followed by the overview model, with some more details on achievements at different levels or with partners, to the causal model which elaborates on full details in order to specify all interlocking elements.

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[3] This evaluation approach and the proposed result chains are used in recent years under the term "theory-based impact evaluation" that focusses on mainly understanding the change process and/or identifying where the change process in complex intervention stops. This approach uses techniques like process tracing (see Derek and Pederson 2016).

[4] Deutsche Welle Akademie disagrees and believes that there is much more added value in the overview model

Therefore, we will assess to which understanding of Theory of Change a specific programme corresponds.

V. SDC's media sector model

To answer the research questions, we refer to the SDC's guidelines on media support (2007, and 2019 forthcoming) that are based on a media sector model that describes various layers of the media sector that all have an influence on the final product of media content that is delivered to and used (or not used) by the audience. This layers' model is based on academic literature (Shoemaker and Reese 1996). The layers influencing media content are:

Journalists: Reporters and journalists produce media content based on knowledge, journalistic research, journalism role concepts, and skills in writing, production and presentation. Often, their capacity to fulfil those tasks needs to be strengthened.

Media organisations: these are the media outlets with all their organisational hierarchies that condition the work of reporters. Often, editors and owners decide what is published, and not reporters and journalists.

Media institutions: these are organisations working outside media outlets, but supporting their work in general; such as press councils, media research institutions, colleges and universities engaged in journalism education.

Media economics: this describes the influence of economic and financial conditions on media outlets, both outside media organisations; such as the general economic environment, the advertising market etc., and within media organisations, for example, the success or failure in achieving economic sustainability in an individual media outlet. This layer mainly influences resource allocation to journalists and newsrooms, reflecting the double nature of media houses as having a public role (of organising public dialogue) and a profit-oriented private role.

Media law, media politics, regulations and reality: media laws and regulations define how freedom of expression and freedom of information are organised in specific contexts. This has an immediate influence on content, as it shapes the space for journalists. Censorship, self-censorship, intimidation, threats and safety concerns play a role within this layer.

Societal beliefs and values: this layer about deep-rooted attitudes within societies may also shape the work of journalists in a more indirect way. It is especially relevant in the case of violent conflict; for example, on reporting about "the other side".

In this model, the **audience** consists of the general public as ordinary citizens. Additionally, it also consists of the government, other state institutions, political parties, economic actors and an organised civil society. Audiences are understood as active, rather than passive consumers. In modern times, ordinary citizens as well as other stakeholders (for example, citizen journalists or bloggers) have many more opportunities to express themselves and influence public opinion. However, they are not bound by journalistic principles.

This media sector model serves to analyse media environments in specific countries or contexts, as the layers can be compared to an ideal setting. During the planning stage of projects, it is therefore used as a needs analysis to identify the shortcomings of an existing

media sector. Additionally, it can be used to identify potential entry points for interventions in the media sector. It should be mentioned, that the layers are conceptually different from each other, although they jointly shape media content. However, shortcomings in one layer cannot be compensated by better performances in other layers.

The media sector model integrates new developments in digitisation, as, for example, online newspapers are by definition media organisations, even if they do not have a print version and are only available online. However, the websites of organisations such as universities or business companies, or other platforms or blogs are not media organisations as they do not adhere to journalism ethics and principles, even if they also influence public opinion. We also need to differentiate conceptually between media organisations and communication channels. Twitter, Facebook or other "social media" are technical channels, on which opinion and content is shared. They are not media organisations in the sense of this model which defines a media organisation as having the normative and public role of informing citizens impartially and comprehensively on day-to-day events as well as on background around a diversity of topics, opinions and viewpoints, and bound to ethical principles laid down in codes of conduct. That is conceptually different from opinion sharing by individuals, even if the opinion is shared on mass-oriented technical channels.

Graph 1: The media sector and its layers
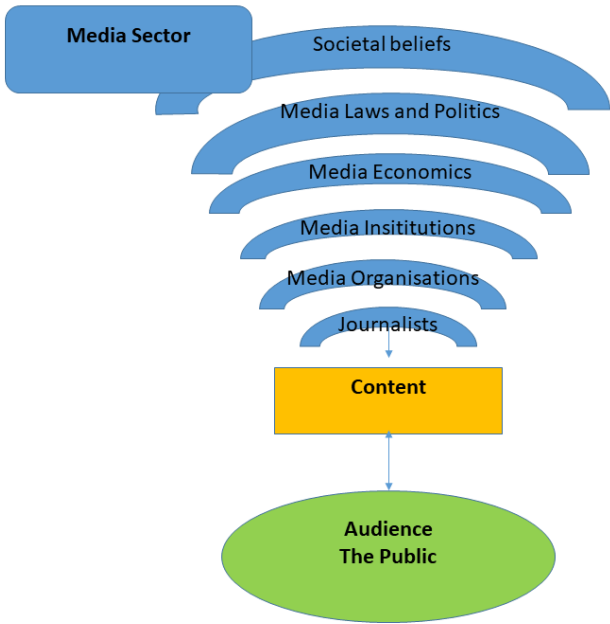
Our analysis is based on this model. However, as the research questions for this study were not only on media but, additionally, on governance, the model had to be enlarged in order to integrate the wider context and to look at the interplay of the media sector with other actors in the governance and policy environment. Therefore, civil society as an actor on its own within society was added, as well as political parties and state institutions including the government. The larger model (see graph 2) allows for better understanding of how the public sphere is

organised, and how the different stakeholders interact with each other and the government. For example, the potential mutual support of media and civil society within the area of governance can provide the focus for donors and NGOs planning an intervention or trying to understand the elements that lead to impact. This model is about the public sphere where media organise essential parts of the dialogue between citizens, state institutions and other political actors such as political parties, economic actors and civil society. With this larger model, we think result chains can be formulated more easily, as the model already includes those actors that are in the focus of governance approaches.

Graph 2: The Public Sphere
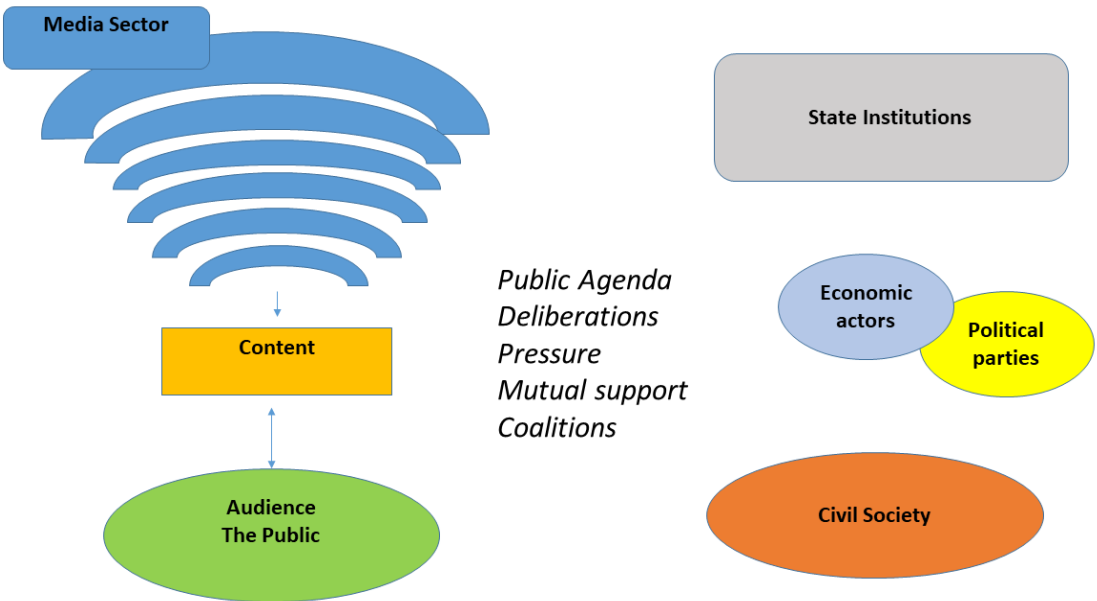
VI. Results

VI.1. Typology of programmes with relation to media and governance

SDC

Within the collection of SDC programmes in the realm of media and governance, there were three types of programmes.

1. **Media as priority:** Programmes in which media support is the dominating part (e.g., the programmes to transform the former state broadcaster in Tunisia and Burkina Faso, the programme in the Grands Lacs region, in Somalia, or the programmes in Tanzania)

2. **Comprehensive Governance projects with strong media component:** These programmes have a clear focus on improving governance, but media play also an important role. Those programmes try to achieve the governance objectives by working on various factors that have a potential to influence governance. For example, the programmes in Mali on local governance and decentralisation, in

which civil society and media execute public control of local governments. Or the one in Bhutan, which combines better access to services, the fight against corruption, youth engagement and supporting independent media in one programme. Or the one in Benin, where both civil society and media are engaged in requesting and improving on government accountability.

3. **Minor role for media:** Governance programmes in which media play a minor role. In these programmes media are mainly used for dissemination of selected results. Examples are the governance programme in Serbia, in which media should report on the results of governance projects, or the civil society support programme in Macedonia, where the Council of Media Ethics and an association of journalists were supported. In Kosovo, SDC conducted a programme on democratisation, in which media houses could also submit proposals for support.

Fondation Hirondelle, BBC Media Action, Free Press Unlimited, Deutsche Welle Akademie

Naturally, the programmes of specialised media supporting organisations who participated in this study (Fondation Hirondelle, BBC Media Action, Free Press Unlimited, and Deutsche Welle Akademie) fall into the category of "media as priority", and not under "comprehensive governance projects". However, within these projects we can distinguish between projects with

- o **purely media-oriented objectives**: objectives are confined within the media sector; i.e. the projects overall goals refer to objectives within the sector. For example, projects working on safety of journalists have defined as their overall goal that the safety of journalists in country ABC is improved.
- o **objectives beyond the media sector**: these media projects aim at objectives outside the media sector; for example, to contribute to democratisation, civic participation, social cohesion, lowering of tensions between groups in society etc, or other changes within the society or with policy.

With Fondation Hirondelle, we have noticed that earlier projects were confined to the media sector, whereas more recent documents speak of achieving objectives outside the media sector. For the other implementing organisations, there were too few documents to be able to confirm or disprove this trend.

VI.2 Typology of programmes with regard to layers (RQ1)

The organisations participating in this study show different profiles with regard to the layers in media support. It has to be noted that the layer of societal beliefs is not directly worked on by the implementing organisations or donors.

SDC

As an international donor, SDC has a larger portfolio than media support organisations. We have seen that some SDC programmes are comprehensive, working on governance and media in the same project (e.g. Bhutan, Benin, Mali, Morocco, Grands Lacs), whereas other work with media only ("media as priority", e.g. Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Niger, Somalia).

Regarding the layers, SDC has a focus on capacity building of journalists (11 out of 15 projects), on direct content production (8 out of 15) and on direct support in building up media organisations (often local radio stations, 7 out of 15). The legal environment (4 out of 15) and the economic sustainability of media outlets (3 out of 15) are less often included. Supporting media institutions (associations of journalists, press councils) play a minor role.

It is also remarkable that the SDC portfolio has some projects (Tanzania, Grands Lacs, Bhutan) in which they work on almost all layers of the media sector, as a means to contribute to a sound development of the entire sector. It is important to mention that working on all layers can also be achieved by good coordination between various donors and better coordination among implementers.

Hirondelle

Fondation Hirondelle is a Swiss journalists association specialised in creating independent media outlets in conflict countries or post-conflict settings. Over many years, it has founded nation-wide media outlets, often in collaboration with the UN. In recent years, it has added another approach by establishing an independent production unit for impartial news and dialogue programmes that is then distributed by already existing networks of local radio stations in the country.

Fondation Hirondelle works mainly in

- o Setting up media organisations and media outlets
- o Capacity building of journalists and
- o Directly producing content,

Hirondelle does not work on safety of journalists, legal environment or media institutions.

DW Akademie

Deutsche Welle Akademie is Germany's largest media development organisation, being active over many decades in developing countries. DW Akademie was for many years mostly engaged in the capacity building of journalists, but has changed and enlarged its focus to other areas as well.

DWA sees its efforts explicitly as a human rights-based approach (see DWA: *A Strategic Model for Media Development*), which requires creating and supporting media environments that are free, pluralistic and independent. DWA has defined four key areas of action: political and legal frameworks; qualification; professionalism and economic viability; participation in society[5]. Consequently, DWA clusters its projects according to the four strategic areas, not to the layers of the media sector. Nevertheless, for comparative reasons, we looked at the DWA projects with a focus on the layers.

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[5] In contrast to the SDC model, DWA sees civil society as an integral part of free media landscapes.

Usually, DWA projects cover more than one strategic area (usually three) and consequently more media layers[6]. DWA still works in most projects in **training and capacity building of journalists** and/or they support training institutions, like public or private universities, that are expected to train journalists or other media professionals But the DWA portfolio contains more approaches. Five out of six projects work on strengthening Media and Information Literacy (MIL), which is, according to the SDC model, an activity with **audiences**. However, DWA sees it as well as an activity that supports citizens in becoming media actors on their own, and it considers MIL as a broader concept including e.g. work with state institutions, civil society and media organisations. The engagement in the layer of **legal environment** occurs in two cases (Pakistan, Namibia), as well as support for **media viability,** which is a combination of working on the **economic sustainability** of media outlets (Burkina, Myanmar) and of working on quality content, and better overall economic environment.

More recent is the approach to **supporting actors outside the media sector**, like civil society or the executive government, in building their capacity to communicate – with or without the media– with the population. SDC does that as well, but in projects that combine governance and media activities, and FPU follows a similar model.

FPU

Free Press Unlimited (FPU) is a Dutch NGO, engaged in supporting international media development.

- o It is worth noting that FPU has a strong focus on the **layer of legal environment and legal reality** (6 out of 10 projects) as FPU is highly concerned about the safety of journalists in today's world, and supports journalists with security training, technical tools, insurance and other protection measures to make sure they manage risks better. In this layer they apply, in our view, some innovative tools, like new forms of insurance for journalists working in conflict zones, and trying to establish cooperation between journalists and security forces as part of the state apparatus.
- o The other focus is **capacity building** (training) for journalists in various topics, that range from conflict sensitive journalism (Nigeria) over professional journalism (Somalia) to investigative journalism (Sudan), or on specific topics (e.g. children issues, Tunisia). These efforts are often accompanied by production grants. These should ensure that improved capacities will lead to better **content,** which makes training and content production strongly connected.
- o However, in some occasions FPU supports better **content** without training; for example, in the Publeaks project where FPU provides a tool to facilitate the protected communication between potential whistle-blowers and journalists in order to produce more relevant content.
- o An additional focus is working with **audiences,** i.e. in 4 out of 10 projects. In one project (" Keeping it Real") it works on digital media literacy, developing a curriculum for better media literacy, and in other projects (Sudan and Tunisia) FPU intends to engage with the audience in enabling dialogue. This is either on radio or other media,

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[6] Only the project in Cambodia works solely in one strategic field (participation in society) and in the layers of audience and content, because it focusses on strengthening MIL of young people who, in turn, produce some special youth content on a popular radio station.

or in real life dialogue between different audience sub-groups; for example, youth and older people.

o FPU also works on economic sustainability, via capacity building for media managers, and with media institutions; for example, on self-regulation.

BBC Media Action

BBC Media Action is the international development organisation of the BBC, and one of the big players in media support. It uses media to inform, connect and empower. In doing so, it tries to stimulate positive change in the areas of governance, health, resilience and humanitarian response.

For this study, we had asked BBC Media Action to provide us only with documents on programmes working in the area of governance. These programmes follow a similar approach, adapted to each country's context, and containing the same Theory of Change. We have screened the programmes in Afghanistan, Nepal, Tanzania, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. They all work with information and dialogue programmes on national and local radio stations.

With this programme BBC is engaged in the following layers

- Capacity building of journalists (via producing a joint programme in local radio stations)
- Content production (various outputs like dialogue programmes, other governance programmes)
- Engaging the active audience (in dialogue programmes) and sometimes even outside the radio programme, with open days and community debates.
- In some programmes, they have included working on economic sustainability of local radio stations.

BBC Media Action did not work on legal environment in those programmes.

VI.3 Use of different models of Theories of Change

With regard to Theories of Change, we have observed the following within the programme documents:

- **No explicit Theory of Change:** in many documents there is no explicit Theory of Change mentioned, but the elements of a Theory of Change might be identified in the document or by interpreting the Logframe. This can be observed in some documents from SDC, Fondation Hirondelle, Free Press Unlimited, and Deutsche Welle Akademie. Only the BBC Media Action evaluation studies explicitly mentioned a Theory of Change in all of its documents, and added a graph.
- **Overview Theory of Change:** Deutsche Welle Akademie deliberately does not mention the underlying Theory of Change in the text of the programme document, because in its view it can be identified in the Logframe. However, DW Akademie's Theories of Change are summarised as a graph produced during planning workshops (called "strategy chart"), but which is usually not reflected in DWA programme

documents. These graphs summarise the flow from activities to outputs and outcomes and, finally, to impacts in one picture, with arrows connecting the different levels. It is based on participative discussions within the project team as well as stakeholders and target groups. In SDC's terminology, this is equivalent to the "overview" approach. As already mentioned, the BBC Media Action also summarises its Theory of Change in a graph, connecting activities with outputs, outcomes and impacts. The graph, however, uses the same terms and language as the text, and does not show how the steps link to each other as causal elements.

- **Narrative Theory of Change:** In some documents (mainly SDC and FPU) there is an explicit chapter on "Theory of Change" or "impact hypothesis", used as synonyms. Those chapters do not elaborate on a Theory of Change as a series of interlocking causal steps, but provide a brief summary of the general pre-conditions for a successful change. The pre-conditions described are – naturally – on a very abstract level, as shown here with an example from SDC's project on supporting decentralisation in Mali. It says under "Hypothese d'impact":

« L'impact du programme porte sur l'amélioration des conditions de vie des populations à travers la fourniture de services publics de qualité et de façon transparente. Pour obtenir cet impact, le Programme postule trois hypothèses fondamentales :
  - *L'Etat met en œuvre ses réformes dans le cadre du développement économique régional*
  - *Le contexte politico-sécuritaire est stable dans les régions du Nord*
  - *La société civile et le secteur privé prennent conscience de leurs responsabilités citoyennes dans la reconstruction de l'Etat et de la cohésion sociale »*

The same type of statement is present in the documents for Benin and Niger, so it looks quite common. This kind of narrative statement means that if favourable preconditions prevail (the government follows its reform agenda, the political context is stable and civil society accepts its responsibilities) – then the programme will be successful. This type of statement is similar to the risks and assumptions column in Logframes.

- **Causal Theory of Change:** there is no document that has fully elaborated a Theory of Change according to the causal model; i.e. a series of interlocking steps leading from activities to outputs, outcomes and impact. However, in a few documents, the Theory of Change is described, though only in parts, in the sense of the causal concept already mentioned

Some organisations have recently intensified their efforts to develop better Theories of Change. Free Press Unlimited had made a special effort. It had started with three different Theories of Change, for three different outcomes/impacts, but still with the usual three step approach in Logframes only (output – outcome – impact). Through a series of workshops with project staff in different continents and projects, they collected various results or effects of their programmes as seen by their own staff (the process used a method called "outcome harvesting"). This delivered a rich collection of stories about the achievements of their projects that FPU was not fully aware of before. From the viewpoint of a causal understanding of Theory of Change, this

collection is nothing else than the hitherto missing intermediate step in causal result chains trying to formulate the hypothesised result chains leading from activities to output.

In SDC's practice within media projects in the field, the causal model is almost unknown. Usually, programme officers at SDC or in implementing organisations mostly refer to the Logframe in reporting and monitoring, and hardly come back to the Theory of Change during project execution. This was confirmed in a group discussion with USAID via Skype. Donors so far do not require that Theories of Change are used in daily practice, because Theory of Change is conceptualised as the overall vision of a media supporting organisation.

In sum, the potential of using result chains models instead of narrative models is so far untapped.

Assessment of the use of theories of change

In all of the documents, we have seen mostly the narrative and overview models of Theories of Change that mainly summarise the already existing Logframe in a text or a graph. Below are just a few examples of what that looks like, demonstrating that the gaps between outputs, outcomes and impacts are considerable.

In Hirondelle's projects, it is often assumed that better information leads to participation, which in turn favours social dialogue and democratic society:

- o Hirondelle's project in CAR speaks of contributing to dialogue by producing independent factual information, and that understanding of the issue of reconstruction will lead to democratic renovation.
- o In its project in DRC (jeunes et election), it states that better information provides tools to youth that enables them to participate in elections.
- o Hirondelle's project in South Sudan (Radio Miraya) said it will provide high quality news programmes that will, in the end, contribute to the creation of a democratic and peaceful new state. As intermediate steps, it is only mentioned that stories are on the public agenda and listeners engage in public debate.

Also SDC programmes show the same pattern:

- o SDC's Somali project describes precisely how the media project improves radio content and how it is disseminated. But concerning media effects it just states that vulnerable Somali groups are empowered to make informed choices, which will lead to reducing poverty and promoting peace.
- o The Tunisia programme states that the project leads to less tension between the coast and the interior, because the project works in neglected areas.
- o The project in Benin presumes that the diffusion of relevant information by local media will lead to civil society asking for accountability, and local governments responding to requirements from citizen.

Deutsche Welle Akademie shows the same pattern:

- o The DWA's Burkina project document says that "die Bevölkerungsgruppe kann, wenn sie Zugang zu relevanten Informationen erhält, als change agents im Sinne eines weiteren Demokratisierungsprozesses wirken" [«once the population gets access to relevant information, it can act as a change agent for further democratisation», translated by authors]. Therefore, there is a potential of beneficial media effects, but there is no further elaboration on how this could work, how access to information leads to people becoming change agents.
- o In DW Namibia's project, the document says that qualification of journalists will lead to high quality and a critical information supply, which will strengthen transparency and accountability and enable participation. This again lacks necessary interim steps to make that work.

Also, FPU and BBC are partly quoting these "rough" Theories of Change. FPU states that

- o good content about refugees and human rights leads to people being better informed. This will then make them engage in constructive dialogue. That is a big step with missing links.
- o a project will improve accountability and empower citizens to stand up for their rights. That also requires further elaboration on how it works.

The BBC's model goes a step further. Its final aim is to improve governments' accountability to citizens. Conceptually, BBC has distilled five key constructs that contribute to achieving this final goal. The five key elements are political knowledge, political participation, discussion (discursive participation), interest in politics and political efficacy[7]. Through its activities and specific objectives (improve journalists' ability to offer good content, improve capacity of journalists to act as a watchdog, increase listeners' knowledge, improve listeners' confidence), BBC Media Action conceives that media can empower citizens to hold their governments accountable. However, BBC Media Action treats all those activities equally, not in a hierarchy, like in a result chain. Therefore, it does not describe how these activities lead to the "cumulative outcome", which is "individuals, organisations and governments are …more engaged in tackling challenges in governance".

We have seen this type of overview of Theories of Change in many documents from all the organisations involved. However, in some few programmes the organisations already offer some more detailed ideas on intermediate elements and interim steps.

Towards a causal model

Hirondelle

In recent programmes, Fondation Hirondelle has elaborated more on ideas of intermediate steps as to why their projects may work; for example, for the Studio Tamani project from 2018 onwards. Hirondelle describes, for example, that professional information will provide

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[7] According to BBC evaluation reports, this is a composite between individual confidence to be able to have an influence, and the external element, having the belief that the government will be responsive.

transparency in corruption issues, which in turn will lead to **public pressure on the elite** and on the government to change policies and curb corruption. This type of more detailed description looks like a promising approach, in our view, according to the causal concept of Theories of Change. Nevertheless, most documents screened still contain "gaps" or "miracle boxes" which should be filled or explained to describe how the project intends to go, for instance, from "better reception" to "diminishing tensions", and link those elements in a causal way.

SDC

In the Bangladesh project (mixed media and governance) there are various steps formulated. Local journalists inform the local population on relevant issues, and voice their concerns. Then, there are special forums organised, in which civil society debates with local governments. That can be seen as putting an issue on the public agenda and informing the government, which looks like an important intermediate step.

DW Akademie

Another example is DW Akademie's Ghana project that speaks of the idea that the project strengthens media's role in control, which will lead to more transparency, **which in turn will increase public pressure** on the government and thus lead to less corruption. The interim step of public pressure that could persuade a government to be more accountable appears highly relevant at a conceptual level.

Or DW's Myanmar project tells us that through the project, civil society in Myanmar will be in a position to place their **topics on the public agenda**, reflected by mainstream media. The agenda setting element is important in the chain towards bigger changes.

FPU

In our view, FPU is a bit more advanced in describing in more detail than others how the activities lead to outputs and outcomes within the media system.

- o One example is the FPU project in Somalia, stating in the analysis that the production of information does not bring change by itself, because it also depends on how civil society makes use of the information to engage and challenge. Therefore, the project had decided to work additionally on the collaboration between Somali journalists and CSOs.
- o Or, for example, in Nigeria (project on conflict reporting) it is stated that through the project
  - Nigerian journalists know exactly what to improve on (monitoring content before training)
  - They feel safe (due to safety training and better relations to security sector)
  - They have themselves better access to information (resource centre)
  - They are paid (there are grants for reporting on conflict issues)

  This way, the result chain between training of journalists and increasing better content on conflicts seems to be closed, so it can be expected that Nigerian journalists report more and better on conflicts in the country.

- o In another project, FPU stipulates that safety training leads to better knowledge and its application. That will achieve higher resilience. However, FPU knows that this

resilience requires that insurance is arranged and / or that legal defence is available, so they have integrated it in the project. It has to be mentioned that FPU does not formulate those elements as interlocking result chains, but, in our view, this could be done.

BBC

Looking at the BBC documents through a "causal Theory of Change" lens, two different results chains were identified:

(a) Capacity building for journalists…
- o Leads to better content (on governance, relevant topics),
- o Better content is received by growing number of recipients,
- o Recipients understand the content
- o Recipients gain in knowledge (on political rights, other governance issues)
- o Those recipients start discussion in families, public spaces
- o Those recipients start political action / participation on local level
- o They request information and accountability from those in power
- ✓ Then leaders respond to those requirements.
- ✓ Leaders change something.

It is one of the specialities of this BBC governance programme that it does not only hope for participation of listeners, but trains listeners in addressing questions to politicians on radio shows. The listeners "learn" to engage with the radio, and this implicitly carries the hope that people will learn from that and may also become more engaged with politicians outside the radio show.

(b) Increasing opportunities for audience to engage in dialogue with leaders. This is a special radio debate programme in various projects.
- o Listeners listen to the programme
- o Like it because of good questions
- o Listeners try out to asking questions themselves on radio
- o Listeners gain knowledge and confidence about discussion
- o Start discussion in social context
- o Start political action on local level
- o Request accountability
- ✓ Then leaders respond to those requirements.
- ✓ Leaders change something.

There might still be gaps in those chains, but it could be a starting point in developing causal Theories of Change.

In sum, all organisations usually use narrative or overview models, but in some programmes, they have started to formulate more elaborated Theories of Change with more intermediate elements, and towards describing concrete and complete result chains.

VI.4 Are there specific associations within governance and media programmes? (RQ2)

a) Overall Goals of Programmes (Impact level)

With regard to overall goals, SDC programmes differ much less between "comprehensive governance projects" and "media as priority projects" than was expected at the start of this research. Naturally, pure governance programmes formulate their overall goals (impact level) under governance topics like democratisation, decentralisation, civic participation or reform of the state; however, the "media as priority" programmes also mention as their final goals something on the level of democratisation, civic participation or social cohesion.

From a Theory of Change perspective, it has been observed that there are no special Theories of Change for different aspects of governance, such as one for decentralisation and another one for civic participation. This may be partly due to the fact that the governance principles – transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, effectiveness, non-discrimination – as described by SDC policy documents (2019), are *"overlapping, interdependent and closely interlinked"* (p. 10), and need to be adapted to specific thematic and country contexts. As a result, the Theories of Change described in the documents do not differentiate according to specific governance goals and objectives (decentralisation, democratisation, implementing human rights, anti-corruption, and elections).

To make the Theories of Change more specific it would require a more detailed description of the various steps from activities of projects to expected outcomes and, finally, impacts.

b) Objectives of Programmes (Outcome level)

Using the SDC model as described above, there are different layers or areas in which programmes wish to achieve an effect as a result of their activities (= outcome level). According to the public sphere model, we look at potential outcomes within

- **Media sector:** changes in capacity of journalists, in media organisations, media laws and regulations, media economics (layers)
- **Content:** changes in actual reporting about specific topics and issues
- **Audience**: changes in knowledge, attitude, and practice of the population (for example, on media literacy or on voting behaviour) or within targeted sub-groups of the population. That could include civil society as part of the audience
- **Government and other Policy Makers:** changes in the attitude or behaviour of government, ministers, public administration, MPs etc.
- **Policy Content:** changes in actual content of legislation, or political processes

We can clearly see that some programmes aim to achieve outcomes strictly within the **media sector** (for example, efforts to improve media regulations for more freedom, or economic viability of media houses, or improving capacity of journalists), and leave it there as the stability and development of the media sector is an aim in itself. Other programmes want to influence firstly the **content** of media coverage (better quality of reporting on oil and gas, for example), but then, secondly, also areas outside the media sector itself. It is based on the hope that better content will provide better access to this professional information, which then triggers changes within the **audience – the public** (or sub-groups of the public, like the elite, the government or civil society) that consumes this type of content. Most programmes at

least formulate objectives with regard to changes within the public sphere or with actors active in the public space.

The main shortcomings seen with regard to Theories of Change on an outcome level are the following:

a) In most cases these expected outcomes are formulated on a general level ("social cohesion is increased", "opportunities for civic participation enlarged", "content is improved and better content will lead to more participation"), but not in concrete details. For example, it remains unclear which groups in society are expected to come closer together and in what concrete aspects of social life the cohesion will be improved, or how the population consuming better content is inspired or enabled to become more active.
As already noted, the current descriptions follow mostly the narrative or overview model, but neglect the causal model of Theory of Change. Therefore, they **suffer from very big gaps within the Theory of Change presented.** The narrative description is very similar to what is already known from the Logframe.

b) Another important aspect is that even when the expected outcomes are formulated in a little more detail and on a concrete level ("tensions between the three countries of Grands Lacs region are diminished"), these outcomes are often not reflected in the Logframe, and are not equipped with indicators ,and thus not monitored during project execution.

In sum, there are some differences in Theories of Change with regard to the layers of the media sector, which are the entry points of the media initiatives. However, they are not very well accentuated when the narrative or the overview model of Theory of Change is used, because these models try to bring all aspects under one roof. This would be different with the causal model, which tries to formulate a "mechanism" or a system of interlocking parts that transmits causal forces between a cause and an outcome (Beach and Pederson 2016), i.e. without holes in the causal story.

VI.5 Are there specific differences between donor and implementing organisations?

There are differences between the donor in our study (SDC) and the media supporting organisations, but they are mainly due to the different nature of a donor with a large portfolio, and the naturally more focussed portfolio of media supporting organisations.

However, these differences are blurred in two ways. Almost all media supporting organisations have meanwhile included governance objectives in their goals, as it is clear that media should contribute to those goals. Some media supporting organisations have already started to support civil society organisations directly (DW Akademie, FPU), similar to what SDC does already quite often in comprehensive media/governance programmes.

Regarding the Theories of Change, we do not see systematic differences between a donor and the implementing organisations. There are some differences between the implementing organisations in what model of Theories of Change they are using. Nevertheless, the current situation looks dynamic, as media organisations have started to formulate Theories of Change that are closer to the causal model.

VI.6 Evidence about media effects from academic research

The study intended to look intensively at existing academic literature on the topic of media effects on governance and other political outcomes, but only at studies based on empirical research. Therefore, a comprehensive, yet not exhaustive search was carried out in various databases, amongst others: Nebis, web of science, Jstor, Sage publications, Elsevier publications, Wiley Online Library, Taylor & Francis online, eBook library ZHAW, Google Scholar.

- The key words used in this search were: "Theory of Change", "media effects", "media influence", "media role" "agenda setting", "peace journalism" combined with
    - democratisation, politics, political participation, political interest, corruption, development, government, governance, voters, election, trust
    - radio, newspaper, TV, television, online news
    - Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe
- Additionally a "pyramid strategy" was used; i.e. that after identifying important sources or reports, the relevant authors were tracked for other publications in this field. Moreover, the bibliography of important publications was studied in order to find additional literature.
- Non-scientific "grey" literature was screened, but mostly excluded. Many African studies and especially studies about the effects of radio and community media have more the character of a workshop report, but do not integrate empirical studies. When they do so, their empirical methodology is often weak or not described[8]. In total, around 140 articles have been reviewed.

First, we present the findings on general insights and limitations; second, we proceed with specific findings according to the areas of interest (knowledge, interest, engagement, participation), and third, we look at specific theories of media effects in order to gain insights beyond the limited scope of strictly governance outcomes.

VI.6.1 Main general insights

First, we need to point out that

- There is little research on how exactly media fulfil their role in democratisation (Jebril et al., 2013, p. 33).

- Most media effect studies are from Western Countries.

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[8] This is slightly different from grey literature in the field of communication for development, where one can find a lot of empirical evidence on communication efforts in the field of health (for example, provided by the NGO Soul City from South Africa, or by Development Media International (DMI) or in the field of agriculture (for example, provided by studies conducted by the NGO Farm Radio International).

- Radio plays a subordinate role in media effect studies. This is partly because radio in Western countries does not play the same important role in the dissemination of information as, for example, in African countries.

- Media effects are difficult to measure: a) there are a lot intervening variables; b) the direction of the effects can hardly be proven.

Some general insights are the following:

- Media effects are mostly small and there are many intervening factors; i.e. effects are not the same for all kinds of people or contexts.
- We have studies that prove the impact of media on specific goals (outcomes) like participation, political interest, opinion and knowledge (amongst others: Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010)
- Political interest, news media exposure and attention to political news are causal and reciprocal (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010); i.e. news media exposure increases political interest, and political interest increases media consumption. Both effects are present. (Sweden)
- There are a lot of studies identifying influential factors – in addition to media exposure – on specific outcomes; for example,
  › On political knowledge: motivation (Fraile, 2010, p. 177; Moeller, Vreese, Esser, & Kunz, 2014), cognitive abilities (Fraile, 2010, p. 177), socioeconomic resources (Fraile, 2010, p. 177)
  › On political engagement:
    - Socialisation of young citizens: If they feel competent about their first time voting, they more likely will be engaged politically throughout their life. (Moeller et al., 2014)
    - News reports covering issues around an MP's [Member of Parliament] own party and covering a negative development were more likely to trigger politicians to take political action" (Helfer, 2016, p. 246, Switzerland).
    - European study: opposition members of Parliament are more likely to react to media coverage than those from government parties. (Midtbø et al., 2014)

- Context matters a lot: "One important finding has been that the media's role [in democratisation] has varied considerably from one country to another and most noticeably between most African countries and a number of Latin American states. International media have played a larger part in the former; national radio and even television in the latter" (Randall, 2007, p. 644). The digital media environment is changing fast. This may limit the validity of previous findings for the future (Jebril et al. 2013, p. 34).

VI.6.2 Media effects on political knowledge

Our literature review has identified the following effects of media exposure towards political knowledge:

- Newspaper exposure (both online and offline) has positive effects on knowledge (and engagement, internal political efficacy) – shown by more than one study (Esser & Vreese, 2016; Fraile, 2010; Moeller et al., 2014)
- Newspapers but not television news play a significant, but limited role in informing the electorate (Druckman, 2005)
- Using social media or reading party websites has no effect on knowledge, but a significant, positive effect on political participation (Dimitrova, Shehata, Strömbäck, & Nord, 2011, p. 110)
- Reading news online has a significant but small effect on knowledge (Dimitrova et al., 2011, p. 110)
- TV news has no effect on knowledge or internal efficacy (Moeller et al., 2014, p. 695)
- TV can influence the level of political trust, but negatively:
    - For people with an initially high level of political trust: greater exposure to television leads to a lower level of trust.
    - Exposure to TV never leads to a higher level of political trust. (Avery, 2009)
- Political learning is connected to political interest, political knowledge and takes note of political information in classical news formats. (Dimitrova et al., 2011)
- US Campaign: using messaging apps (Snapchat, WhatsApp, Facebook messenger …) correlates a) negative with political knowledge, b) positive to knowledge miscalibration, c) does not promote learning of political facts and d) makes people believe they know a lot more about politics than they actually do. (Yamamoto, Kushin, & Dalisay, 2018, p. 2383)

VI.6.3 Media effects on political interest

- News exposure increases political interest (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010).

- For the entire process, it is relevant that some political knowledge exists. Initial political knowledge stimulates political interest. This political interest directs attention to political news and exposure to some media - which in turn increases political interest (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010, Sweden)

VI.6.4 Effects on participation and engagement

For **new democracies**:

- Access to quality press (in contrast to other media access) had positive effect on engagement and participation, even after controlling for interest (Tworzecki & Semetko, 2012)

- Uganda after 2000: "Higher levels of radio exposure are significantly associated with greater political participation. Further, there is evidence that these effects might occur because radio exposure increases listeners' knowledge about politics. However, there is no evidence that radio increases participation because of enhanced efficacy, interest in politics, strengthened attitudes, or messages about material incentives or potential punishments." (Conroy-Krutz, 2018, p. 236)

With regard to digital natives:

- Youth using social media actively (sharing, commenting) show increasing participation (Boulianne, 2015; Xenos & Moy, 2007)

- Social media have a minimal effect on participation in election campaigns (Boulianne, 2015)

- Effects only with heavy social media users who have relatively underdeveloped political identities (Xenos & Moy, 2007)

- Reading news online does not cause change, no increase in participation (Dimitrova et al., 2011)

- Contingent on active communication: digital natives are best informed via the internet, but only when they are active (sharing etc.). The effect on political efficacy and participation is stronger than with any of the other passive forms of getting news. However, very few are active. (Moeller et al., 2014)

- Interactivity and personalisation in online communication (by politicians) affect positively on **political involvement of citizens**. It increases political interest as well, but overall levels were rather low. Other factors, like civic skills, are more important to increase political interest (Kruikemeier, van Noort, Vliegenthart, & Vreese, 2013).

With regard to general media users:

- Newspaper exposure (both online and offline) has positive effects on engagement, (internal political efficacy) – shown by more than one study, while TV news exposure does not. (Esser & Vreese, 2016; Fraile, 2010; Moeller et al., 2014)

- "Messaging app use for news was positively associated with offline and online political participation" and "[…] knowledge miscalibration was positively related to offline and online political participation both directly and indirectly through messaging app use for news." (Yamamoto et al., 2018, p. 2383). In short, using messaging apps does not increase knowledge, but people believe they are more knowledgeable and political participation is increased. However, their participation is based on knowledge miscalibration.

VI.6.5 Media effects on opinion/ attitudes, behaviour change

- Usually, media effects tend to strengthen existing and prevailing attitudes or opinions (for example in voting) rather than change existing attitudes or opinions (Schulz, 2011).

- According to the consistency theory, this is due to selective access to information, although dissonant messages are not avoided. (Garret, 2009a, 2009b)

- Media coverage of a political party has a positive significant effect on voting for this party. Electoral success or failure at least partially caused by the media coverage (Dewenter, Linder, & Thomas, 2018, p. 1)

There are many models of behaviour change; the actual effects of media exposure depend largely on intervening factors:

- Instrumental learning theory (Janis & Hovland, 1959, 1959):
  › Information can change attitudes through learning
  › New attitude needs to be beneficial, more beneficial than old attitude
  › Mass communication is not necessary and not sufficient for effects in changing attitudes
  › Effect depends on mediating factors (dispositions of individuals, confidence in others, interpersonal communication, leaders, perception on source of information, situation of media reception)
- Social cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 2000):
  › Salience
  › Observation of role models
  › Implementation in own behaviour
  › Motivation by social incentives.

- Elaboration likelihood model: explains different cognitive paths of information processing and how the process leads to change or is blocked.

  › Central route: requires a high level of motivation and the ability to process information. This leads to a critical, mental confrontation with the information (high elaboration) and, in the case of successful persuasion, to a change of attitude that is stable and resistant to change.
  › Peripheral route: includes a low motivation and low ability to process information. Orientation is based on superficial cues without critical thinking (low elaboration) and to an unstable attitude. (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)
- Effects depend on the characteristic of the individual communication environment (Metag, 2014; Schmitt-Beck, 2000)
  › If the individual environment is homogenous → no change by contravening messages, because inconsistent messages will be fading out → strengthening effect with consistent messages.
  › If personal environment heterogeneous → moderate effects with contravening messages

- Even short newspaper exposure influences voting behaviour (Gerber, Karlan, & Bergan, 2009)

VI.6.6 Focus media effect theories: agenda setting and framing

Agenda setting

It has been proven by many studies that media establish what people see as relevant and what topics people discuss (Bonfadelli & Friemel, 2017). This agenda-setting effect can be seen in various steps (Bulkow & Schweiger, 2013, p. 177):

- Raising awareness about a topic
- Increasing salience
- Changing priorities in topics on the agenda

There are several models that explain **how the agenda setting process** works (Kepplinger, Gotto, Brosius, & Haak, 1989):

- The more reporting on a subject, the higher the ranking on the public agenda.
- A minimum of coverage is needed to reach the public agenda.
- At a certain level of reporting, the relevance of the topic only increases at a below-average rate. There is a wear and tear effect.
- A subject often is present longer on the public than on the media agenda.
- Mirror effect: the public agenda determines the media agenda.

It is important to note that also politicians respond to the media-set agenda, particularly during legislation processes.

The detailed agenda-setting effect is dependent on

- Issue sensitivity (is topic already of importance to an individual?)
- Newness (agenda setting effect only on those people who did not know the topic before)
- Diversity of media use (diversity diminishes agenda setting, because various media report on different issues)
- Context: immediate experience from own environment **overrides** media-driven agenda setting (Bulkow & Schweiger, 2013)

Agenda Setting of Politicians:

> "Information acquisition does not appear to be the mechanism underlying the majority of agenda-setting processes. By contrast, the chance that a news story leads to action by an MP [Member of Parliament] is much larger when the MP knew about the story before it appeared in the media." (Sevenans, 2017, p. 238)

Denmark: "Media attention to an issue generates attention from political parties when the issue is one that political parties have an interest in politicising in the first place." (Green-Pedersen & Stubager, 2010, p. 663)

Framing

It is also important how the media frame stories in their reporting: „To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and / or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). At least two (out of those four) elements must be explicitly present for a frame; the other two can be implicit (for example, when they have been mentioned in another report or if they can automatically be deduced from the other elements). If two frame elements are present, the result is an evaluation and a basic attitude towards the topic becomes apparent" (Matthes, 2007, 145, translated by author).

Agenda Setting and Framing do not only influence the significance of topics or politicians; they can also influence which dimensions are used to evaluate the topics or politicians (Priming). This means that media not only influence which topics people think about, but also what criteria they use for evaluation of actors or debates. For instance, by evaluating political candidates, it is likely that environmental issues are an important factor, because climate change actually is a highly ranked subject on the agenda.

Framing studies

A lot of framing studies have been conducted. However, these framing studies often have a laboratory design, which means that many environmental factors are not taken into account. They often a) concentrate only on one or two frames, where in reality many frames can be used, b) do not consider time as a relevant factor, c) do not consider previous attitudes that people had.

- Studies show that media recipients, depending on circumstances, took over media frames or schemata (for example, Islam always connected to terrorism, Islam as a threat). Their attitude was influenced by framing (Matthes, 2008; Schemer, Wirth, & Matthes, 2012). "Media framing thus proved an adequate instrument for determining the public's interpretation of an issue" (Wettstein, 2011).
- Media frames influence attitude and behaviour not only on a cognitive, but also on an emotional level. (Kühne, 2015).

- Media frames have an influence on the political attitude of citizens. However, Matthes (2007, p. 310) could only prove framing for a memory-based judgement[9], but not for an on-line judgement[10].
- Trust in media led to stronger media use, but not stronger framing effects (Matthes, 2007, p. 310)
- Schemer (2012) "confirms the value-resonance hypothesis; that is, value appeals are more persuasive when value-laden messages match with the value orientations of recipients."
- Only frames that are used permanently in discourse can influence the attitudes of the citizens. (Matthes, 2007, p. 310)
- "Results show that repetitive framing leads both to stronger and more persistent effects than single exposure. The persistence effects are most evident for individuals with moderate political knowledge." (Lecheler, Keer, Schuck, & Hänggli, 2015)
- "[…] most studies report effects that persist beyond initial exposure and that may be influential for subsequent decision-making over time, but that durability of effects heavily depends on whether individuals are exposed to competitive frames also." (Lecheler & Vreese, 2016)

A few studies looked at how long framing effects last. Results differ between ten days (Druckman & Nelson, 2003), two (Vreese, 2004) or three weeks (Tewksbury, Jones, Peske, Raymond, & Vig, 2016). A "[…] repetitive or pre-treatment exposure to news frames still to some extent impacts decision-making later on." (Lecheler & Vreese, 2016, p. 20)

- Influence on effect duration
  › Negatives frames have longer-lasting effects than positive frames
  › Frames on salient political issues have a longer-lasting effect than on non-salient issues
  › Behavioural intentions (more studies needed)
  › Emotions (more studies needed)
  › Competitive Framing: recency effects (= the tendency to discount older information and to value more recent information more) dominate framing effects
  › Repetitive framing leads to stronger effects (Lecheler & Vreese, 2016, p. 20, based on a broad literature review)
- Competitive framing can decrease news framing effects. In that case, the influence of personal beliefs increases. (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Sniderman & Theriault, 2004)
- Studies show that framing does not have the universal effect as sometimes believed. Interpersonal communication, knowledge and predispositions influence the effects of media frames. The alignment between media frames and existing values of recipients leads to stronger framing effects than misalignment (Shen & Hatfield Edwards, 2005).

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[9] Memory-based judgments: information is collected and consulted at a later stage when the judgement is formed. The judgement is made when necessary. Memory-based judgements are less stable than on-line judgements. Depending on what information is remembered, the judgement is different. (Matthes (2007, pp. 158–159))

[10] On-line: The judgement is formed and stored immediately when the information is first recorded. The judgement can be retrieved later, the information can no longer be retrieved. (Matthes (2007, pp. 158–159))

Community Media

There are many reports about community media, but hardly any are based on an empirical, methodological design. Although they discuss media effects, these reports often do not really measure effects. In many cases, effects are taken for granted. Some studies give some anecdotal evidence of effects of community radios on political participation, peace development and education, but don't provide a clear picture:

- Tanzania: involvement with political talk programmes on community promotes political participation and interest. Political talk-back programmes are the most significant. "The popularity of political talk radio is greatly aided by use of text messaging." (Bello & Wilkinson, 2017, p. 36). Community radios serve "[…] useful democratic purpose in empowering citizens by giving voice to those considered 'marginalized', and at the same time fulfilling a major role of providing valued information at the local levels. As the foundation of public sphere, the stations seem to encourage active citizen participation and a healthy diversity of opinion" (Bello & Wilkinson, 2017, p. 22).

- Chad & Niger: "Although PDEV [Peace through Development Projects] programmes often only tangentially address 'hard edged' topics such as terrorism, they are effective at addressing the drivers of violent extremism in their audience and do achieve clear outcomes in line with PDEV programme goals" (Greiner, 2010, p. 42).

- Benin: Higher literacy scores in villages with access to community radios. Greater access to community radios leads to more private investments by households in their children's education (Keefer & Khemani, 2014, p. 69).

Assessment of academic evidence for donors and implementers

Based on this overview on the empirical academic evidence on media effects on governance issues, the following can be stated with regard to Theories of Change used in media development:

- The agenda setting effect of media exposure has so far been neglected by donors and implementing organisations with regard to both the public agenda and the political agenda. Agenda setting might be a pre-condition for increasing public pressure on governments.
- Framing can additionally play a significant role towards governance issues, but again is so far not clearly acknowledged by donors and implementing organisations.
- It is proven that media exposure to quality media increases political interest, at least in Western countries.
- Empirical studies on media in developing countries are lacking, especially from Africa.
- The connection between media exposure and political participation is complex and thus not crystal clear, as it depends on many intervening variables.
- The effects of digital and social media look rather limited and are yet to be more thoroughly investigated.
- Changing attitudes is a long-term endeavour and depends on many other factors.

VI.7 Should we have one Theory of Change for media support with governance objectives or many Theories of Change?

Taking the causal model of Theory of Change into consideration, we think that different Theories of Change for different project activities would make projects conceptually better, easier to plan and to monitor results, and ultimately much more suitable to learn from via evaluation studies.

This statement is based on (a) insights from actual programme descriptions that tried to formulate an overarching Theory of Change for media support with a governance perspective and (b) conceptual considerations about support in developing a mature media sector in developing countries.

a) Some organisations have tried to develop an overarching Theory of Change for the media sector; for example Free Press Unlimited for a large programme with many different activities in over 20 countries. However, the overarching Theory of Change was very general in our view, comprising many aspects that are conceptually different. In our opinion, it looks almost impossible to bring the necessarily complex interventions in media support with its many layers under one roof.

b) From our point of view, this insight is obvious when looking at the SDC media sector model: projects supporting media's economic sustainability and those working to improve the capacity in journalism work with different target groups (managers, advertisers, accountants / or reporters, editors, stringers,) and with different types of trainers. They follow different objectives (sustainable profits OR content with specific quality). Therefore, it makes sense to formulate two different Theories of Change or results chains, as those activities have completely different outputs and outcomes and different ways of functioning. The same is valid for other areas that are the focus of projects within the media sector. In addition, as context factors and other influencing variables vary between countries, the Theories of Change need to be specific.

When looking at the different approaches that may influence the development of the media sector, it becomes obvious that we have

1. **Some areas for which the final aim is the stabilisation of the media sector** as such, and the specific Theory of Change could end there. For example, projects promoting freedom of expression oriented media laws and regulations will achieve – if everything runs well – a stable media sector because it is protected by those media laws. That offers opportunities for better reporting, but will not happen automatically. Therefore, the result chain for this section of activities ends within the media sector. The same holds for supporting media viability. If it is achieved, it is good for the sector and offers opportunities to invest in journalistic research and better reporting, but again it cannot be expected to happen automatically.

2. **Other areas in media support that clearly aim at influencing areas outside of the media sector, namely the audience or policy**. For example, if projects support capacity-building for journalists, improving their research and writing skills, it can be expected that those capacities will be applied in the newsroom and, therefore, that media content will improve. Therefore, the

result chain for capacity building in journalism can go beyond the media sector and at least impacts media content. In some cases, it might also be possible to enlarge that same Theory of Change to include the audience that consumes the changed content and expects alterations in attitudes or practice by the public.

In sum, we propose to

- formulate different Theories of Change for all approaches that are conceptually different, and
- formulate them in as much detail as possible, clearly identifying all the necessary steps (interlocking elements) necessary to achieve outcomes or impacts
- accordingly identify items to monitor in order to track those elements

This implies that one project can have more than one Theory of Change, as one outcome can be achieved via various pathways, involving different actors, and that needs to be considered.

It is open to debate whether it is useful and feasible to develop many different result chains – depending on the entry point and approach of media support – between activities and outputs/outcomes, on the one hand, and to develop a general result chain from those outcomes to the impact within governance. Based on the usual outcomes envisaged by media support (sustainable media sector, safety for journalists, better quality content, high consumption by various audiences), it might be feasible to develop a result chain from increased consumption of quality content to public agenda, increasing private and public discussion as well as pressure on the government, strengthened by civil society action that may finally lead to some of the expected impacts.

VII. Result chains – what they could look like

Based on the conceptual considerations of the causal model of Theories of Change – something more concrete and more detailed than the Logframe, revealing assumptions, and disclosing black boxes - and in order to make good use of the concept, we propose to formulate (various) result chains according to the layers within the media sector. This way, at least every layer that is part of a media programme has its own Theory of Change, linking activities with outputs and outcomes in much more detail. This would be as practical and concrete as possible and it would avoid mixing too many elements in one result chain.

A media programme working on three different layers needs at least three different Theories of Change, although at the end of the chain, the same elements might appear again.

As part of our suggestion, we provide some ideas below about concrete Theories of Change, having in mind that, in general, those result chains might not always be strictly linear. Therefore, we formulate one example with different deviations or branches. We also stress that, in practice, those result chains would greatly benefit from being developed or adapted in a participatory process with local actors.

It should also be mentioned that some enabling conditions (or assumptions) for conducting programmes need to be in place, which can be seen as external factors (i.e. not to be influenced by the project), in contrast to other conditions, seen as internal factors, as they are part of a project and thus of result chains. For example, if a media support organisation wants to support better election reporting, it is necessary to find sufficient journalists interested in that kind of reporting, and sufficient media outlets reporting on elections. Another external factor may be the existence of a distribution system to transport newspapers to vendors and consumers, and a broadcast infrastructure to distribute radio programmes. The result chain approach would see those elements as external conditions, and then focus on how the training translates into better knowledge of journalists, establishment of a critical journalism concept within editorial newsrooms, better content, and, finally, better understanding of election issues by the audiences.

In the graphs below, we use different colours: elements with the same colour belong jointly to a specific level of results. We start activities with blue, describe first outputs in yellow, followed by green as the next level of outputs or achieved outcomes. The final step in outcomes is marked in orange. External factors or enabling assumptions are placed in a red box below. The final impact of those programmes on governance level is not included in the graphs, in order to avoid becoming too complex. Usually various outcomes contribute to one governance impact.

It should also be mentioned that usually only media implementing organisations are fully responsible for achieving outputs, but not fully responsible for achieving outcomes (and even less so for impacts), as so many other factors beyond the project will play a role in achieving those.

Capacity building of journalists (for example, in elections)

Training of journalists in basic professionalism and/or specific knowledge is one of the most used interventions in media development. Let us assume an NGO has opted to train journalists in building basic skills, based on a journalism concept of impartial but critical journalism, and also providing specific knowledge on elections in order to improve reporting during the electoral campaign. A specific goal has been set to ensure that candidates are assessed for their programmatic ideas and less on personality traits. Thus, the result chain below is an option. In practice and in a specific context, it is feasible and maybe even recommended to add some interim steps, depending on the conditions on the ground.

**Graph 3: How training leads to better content**
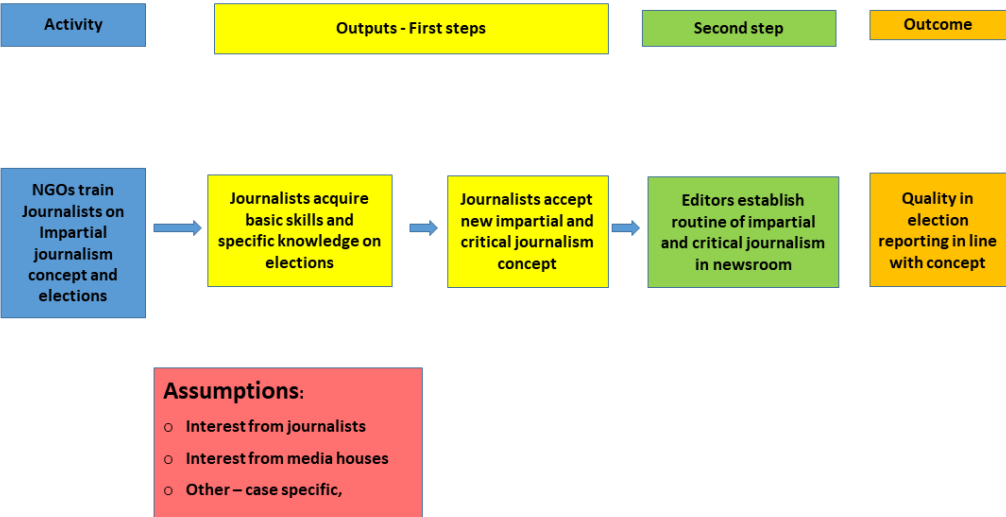
Content

Many media supporting NGOs work directly on content (often combined with training), enhancing specific and neglected or contentious topics to be expanded on in coverage (minorities, human rights, corruption, election, conflicts). Sometimes those stories lead directly to impact in the real world (so called "impact stories", mostly tackling very specific challenges, like a lack of drugs in a local hospital). However, direct impact of a story tends to be an exception. Against the background of media effects theory, we think that better media coverage will lead first to better understanding on the part of the public and of the elite, which then brings an issue into the public agenda. From there the process can proceed by triggering participation of different actors (ordinary citizens, organised civil society or political candidates in the case of coming elections), which in turn will re-enforce the media echo.

In the case of, for example, reporting on corruption (not in the graph below) , one could hypothesise that this mounting public pressure might later lead the government to take action, thus demonstrating accountability. This result chain shows in detail what it takes to bridge the gap between better content, civic participation and government accountability.
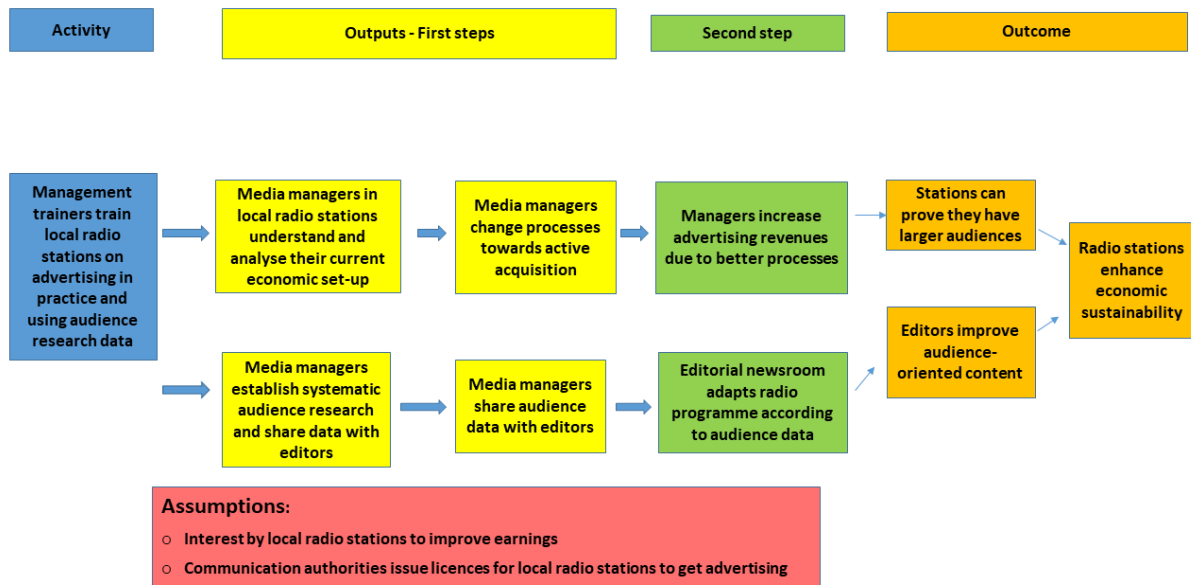
Graph 4: From better content to active participation by citizens and other stakeholders
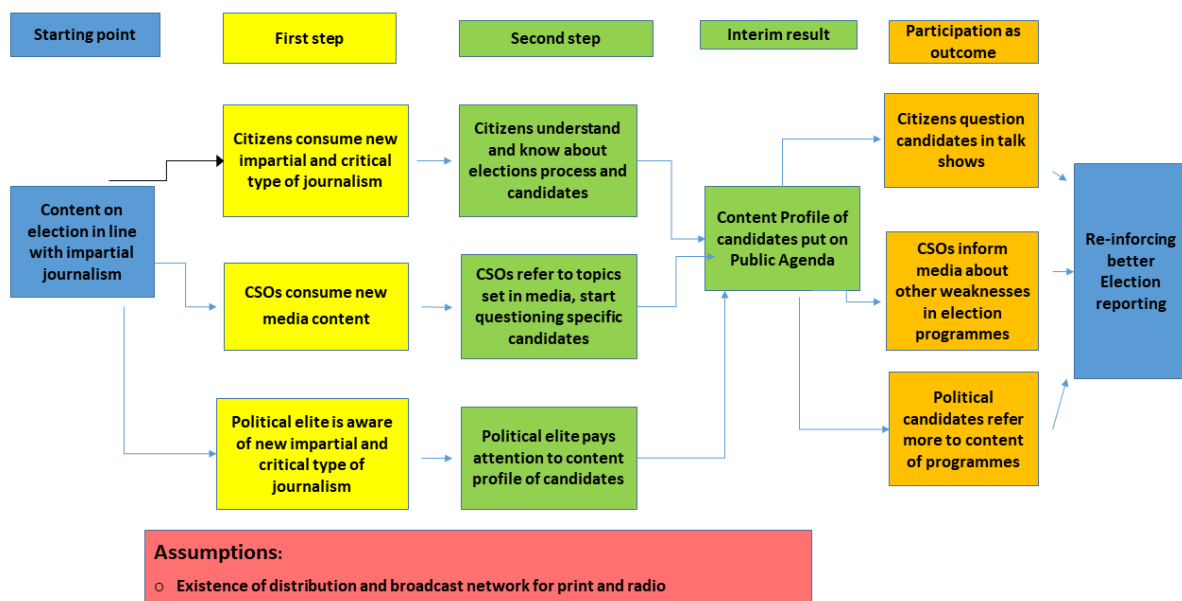
Economic sustainability

The work on economic or financial sustainability is an area on its own, as media-supporting organisations work with media managers in this area (or those who want to become media managers), but not with journalists or reporters, although they might get involved later when audience research data point to the need to adapt content. Ini addition, they may work with media agencies and the advertising industry. Usually, this work calls for different expertise than that offered by journalism trainers.

Graph 5: How to improve economic sustainability

Activity	Outputs - First steps	Second step	Outcome

Management trainers train local radio stations on advertising in practice and using audience research data

Media managers in local radio stations understand and analyse their current economic set-up

Media managers change processes towards active acquisition

Managers increase advertising revenues due to better processes

Stations can prove they have larger audiences

Media managers establish systematic audience research and share data with editors

Media managers share audience data with editors

Editorial newsroom adapts radio programme according to audience data

Editors improve audience-oriented content

Radio stations enhance economic sustainability

Assumptions:
○ Interest by local radio stations to improve earnings
○ Communication authorities issue licences for local radio stations to get advertising

Legal, political environment and legal reality:

Usually, advocacy is used to enhance conducive media laws and regulations, and to establish freedom of expression in the constitution or other laws and regulations. First of all, advocacy works through publicity (publishing complaints, talking about improvements needed etc.) and political lobbying (talking to MPs about freedom of expression), which may then raise more media echo, which in turn places the topic on the public (media, civil society, population at large) and the political agenda (political parties, MPs, government), which may increase pressure on the government. Facing that pressure, the government might be responsive to – at least – calls for negotiations within the legal apparatus (parliamentary working groups, with or without experts from the public) which may finally lead to rejection of bad laws or approval of good laws.

Graph 6: Advocacy work to install better media laws

Starting point — First step — Second step — Interim result — Government response

NGO advocates for freedom of expression and better media law

Media and journalists acquire knowledge about legal framework → Media take the issue up and report about freedom of expression violations

Local CSOs understand the legal framework → CSOs refer to topics set in media, active lobbying

Political elite is aware, at least partly (key influencers) → Key influencers try to push the government

Shortcomings of media law put on Public Agenda

Political pressure on government

Media Echo leads to increased reporting

MPs start elaboration of new media law

Assumptions:
○ Some space for NGOs and media to discuss media laws, although limited

Media institutions

As the layer of media institutions contains many different options (supporting journalists' association, press councils) the Theories of Change will also be different as the focus of activities and objectives changes.

Media organisations

Working with media organisations or media houses themselves can have a slightly different focus than capacity building with reporters and journalists. With media organisations, training becomes more comprehensive, as all stakeholders within a media organisation can become part of an intervention. Some organisations (like the BBC Media Action) see it as more promising than working with individual journalists. Changing routines in journalism and newsrooms, acquiring new journalism concepts etc., requires participation from the entire organisation. Accordingly, the Theory of Change is slightly different from normal "capacity building". The Theory of Change will look specifically at expected changes with editors, owners and other management units.

We also suggest adding some elements in those result chains, that have so far been neglected in the media development fraternity; for example, the issue of credibility in media. This might be a necessary element before other effects take place.

This overview on potential results chains should demonstrate that developing those result chains is a valuable and helpful exercise. The ones described above might still have gaps, and, for specific layers, other results chains with different elements might work better, depending on the specific context. However, we think that this overview can inspire a fruitful discussion on the causal model of Theories of Change and what it could do to improve media programmes.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

In this study, we have seen that, in contrast to causal models, narrative and overview models of Theories of Change are mainly used by donors and implementing organisations,. However, causal models offer a lot more information that would help improve project planning, as well as monitoring and evaluation. That potential is still untapped, although all of the organisations involved in this study have already started to formulate concrete steps that could be parts of causal models.

Our recommendation is to work on causal models of Theories of Change as a standard tool in project planning, as it will give clear context-related insights into what can be expected from projects, and what is feasible in the specific environment. In our view, media support would be much more understandable and realistic. Through formulating result chains, many hidden assumptions come to light, and additional elements that need to be tackled before outcomes can be expected will become obvious.   It would also be a pre-condition to provide impact evaluations that are lacking in the sector of media support for governance.

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