

Institute of Applied Media Studies IAM

Theories of Change Study

Results and Conclusions on Impact Measurement

GFMD Impact Meeting

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Background Impact Measurement

- **High ambitions regarding effects of media interventions**
 - On democracy / good governance
 - On violent conflict and peace processes
- **Two major challenges**
 - Evidence of impacts of media projects is in short supply
 - Academic «media effects theory»: direct and strong effects are rather difficult to achieve

Main Research questions ToC study

- **RQ1:** Are there **specific associations in ToCs** with regard to governance objectives or media in specific contexts?
- **RQ2: What levels** within the media sector are chosen?
- **RQ3:** What differences in ToCs according to donors and implementers?
- **RQ4: Difference** between ToCs and research evidence from **academic studies**?
- **RQ5:** Holistic ToC for entire media sector or specific ones?
- Open – discovering items through screening

Material and methods

- **Sample**

- 56 programs on media and governance (excl. C4D programs)
- from **SDC / Hironnelle / Free Press Unlimited / BBC Media Action / Deutsche Welle Akademie**
- 140 academic journal articles, (empirical studies on media effects)

- **Methods**

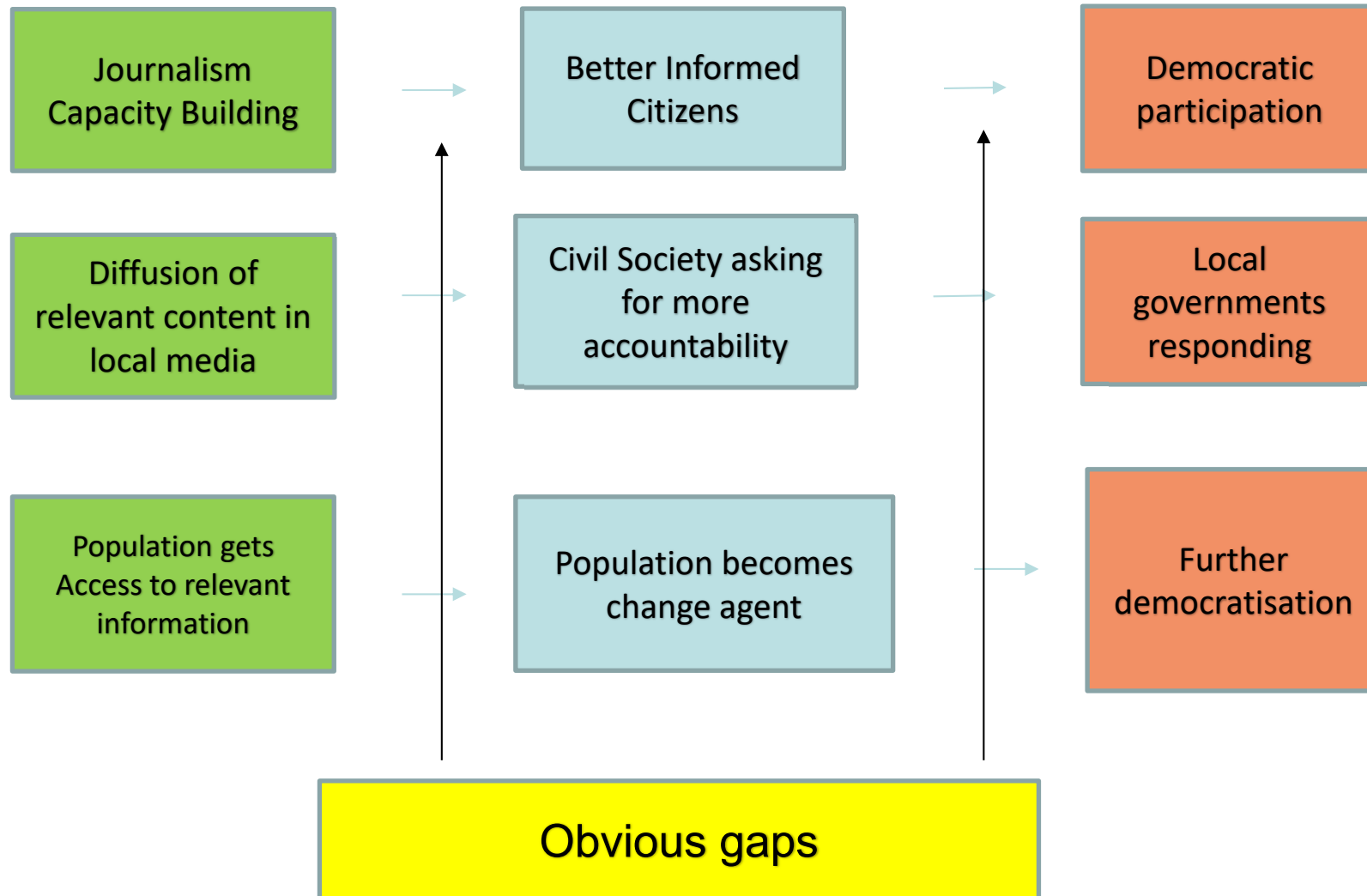
- Qualitative content analysis of programs (focus, layers, type of ToC)
- Screening academic literature
- Interviews operational staff in projects (but few)

MAIN RESULTS

Theory of Change – Three models or concepts

- **Narrative Model** – ToC as summary hypothesis
 - ToC as one or two sentences, summarizing how the project should work to achieve its objectives (close to LogFrame)
- **Overview model** – ToC as a visual product
 - ToC as a graph summarizing the project logic from activities (of partners) to outputs, outcomes and final impact (close to LogFrame)
- **Original Causal model** – ToC as result chain
 - developed in 1990s, as usual Results Framework were perceived as not working for complex evaluations.
 - ToC should help organisations to become aware of their assumptions and formulate detailed result chains (Weiss 1995)

Typical cases of Theories of Change – Obvious gaps



Further insights

- We did **not detect specific ToCs** for specific governance goals (democratisation, participation, accountability)
 - Due to unspecific nature of ToCs
- Naturally, projects **differ on main layers** (Journalists / Media houses / Media institutions / Economics/, Media laws).
 - But ToCs are still not specific and do still not present details
- Some organisations have their specialities, most are general
- Some have started to formulate more intermediate steps
- **Agenda setting** and **Framing** as media effects so far neglected.

Evidence from academic studies and literature

- **General insights on media effects:**
 - Few studies on how exactly media fulfil their role in democratisation
 - Mostly from Western context (so radio does not play a prominent role)
 - Hardly any empirical research on media effects from Africa (where radio plays a dominating role)
 - There is **evidence on some specific steps** or elements of media effects
 - On agenda setting
 - On political knowledge
 - On political interest
 - On political participation
 - On attitudes and opinion
 - Most media effects are small,
 - depending on other intervening factors

Conclusions and Recommendations

- **Causal model** – Huge potential
 - In **Planning** projects
 - Questioning assumptions and reacting in project development
 - Need to develop different result chains according to layer / target groups / context in general
 - In **Impact evaluation** (case study approach)
 - Assessing result chains via process tracing
 - Finding out what works and what does not work (break)
 - Advantages in Learning (compared to RCTs)

Comparison Narrative vs. Causal = Result chains

