



Triggering change – How investigative journalists in Sub-Saharan Africa contribute to solving problems in society

Journalism

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Abstract

This article analyses 12 cases of investigative journalism in Sub-Saharan Africa. The reporters all claimed to have contributed to change processes by influencing government policy, action by state administration, supporting the uptake of scientific

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solutions or provoking public debate. An assessment of these processes shows that in 10 cases, the journalists indeed helped to trigger change and in two cases they failed to do so. The cases are evaluated through an explorative approach inspired by the dynamic models for communication on public issues developed by Rucht and Peters. Different types of investigative stories in Sub-Saharan Africa are identified and hypotheses are developed on key factors that were important in investigating and publishing the stories as well as in achieving change. A decisive element of investigative journalism in Sub-Saharan Africa seems to be the involvement of and the interaction with other societal non-journalist actors.

Keywords

African journalism, impact, investigative journalism, media effects, science journalism

Introduction

In-depth and investigative journalism that goes beyond reporting the daily events is an essential element of liberal democracies (Voltmer, 2006: 2; Waisbord, 2000: 45) but rare in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mudhai, 2007; Steyn and De Beer, 2004: 45), and yet it exists – under difficult circumstances. In one of the major journalism support programmes in the region – the Science Journalism Cooperation Project (SjCOOP) – it was discovered that a considerable number of journalists aim to influence public policy through their reporting and do ‘achieve an impact’.¹ But how does this work in environments that are hardly supportive of this kind of journalism?

So far, almost all media effects research has been conducted in Western countries (Schmitt-Beck, 2012: 231–245) and little is known about the effects of investigative journalism in Sub-Saharan Africa. In this investigation, we document and evaluate selected cases of this special kind of reporting. Brief summaries of these stories given in the index (see appendix 1).

We used an explorative and qualitative approach, inspired by media effects research and models for public communication of political issues. The result is twofold: first, a typology of different change processes triggered by investigative journalism and second, various hypotheses on the factors enhancing the change processes.

Investigative journalism – Characteristics, specifications, models

What is investigative journalism, and what should it be? In the literature, a large number of different definitions are suggested (De Burgh, 2000; Eijk, 2005; Ettema and Glasser, 1998; Feldstein, 2007; Hamdy, 2013: 81; Protesch et al., 1991; Stetka and Örnebring, 2013: 415; Tong, 2011; Waisbord, 2000). Most authors mention several of the following elements:

Originality and importance of the issue treated;

In-depth research;

Investigation in the face of impediments;
Unveiling of secrets and wrongdoings;
Moral aspect of the story;
Reform inspired, action taken or change achieved.

African authors describe various problems for investigative journalism: authoritarian systems, restrictive laws, financial problems and corruption, lack of journalism training and also violence against journalists (Mudhai, 2007; Yusha'u, 2009). Ansell (2010) proposes a multi-faceted, practical definition based on the constitution of the Forum for African Investigative Reporters: investigative journalism should be an 'original, proactive process' which 'looks beyond individuals to faulty systems and processes' (pp. 3, 19).

Overall, the differences between the authors' understanding of investigative journalism are partly conceptual and partly practical. The main conceptual difference is whether investigative journalism primarily aims at the exposure of wrongdoings, whether it intends to support a change process (without exposure) or whether it should only be identified as in-depth journalism. The differences in realisation have to do with working practices and the political context. In order to explore the practice of investigative journalism in Sub-Saharan Africa, we choose to look at the following three dimensions:

1. The change processes the journalists' reports trigger in the political or socio-economic sphere;
2. The work practices of investigative journalists and their working conditions inside and outside their newsrooms;
3. The political, legal, economic and cultural context in which the journalists operate.

Media effects research

This article investigates media content and its influence on societies; hence, it is part of media effects research (Schmitt-Beck, 2012). Recent research demonstrated contingent and limited media effects of newspaper and TV coverage on political knowledge (Gunther and Mughan, 2000; Norris, 2000). Agenda setting effects were also confirmed broadly, (Brosius and Kepplinger, 1990; McCombs and Reynolds, 2009) and positive effects of public broadcasting media systems on political knowledge and participation of citizens were shown (Curran et al., 2009). Other research explained media effects on political knowledge and participation through interpersonal communication as a moderator (Scheufele, 2002).

The above-mentioned Western studies usually use data sets on meso- and macro levels – often combining content analysis with public survey data – in order to identify the effects on an aggregated level. They mostly do not explore the 'effect' on micro level which journalistic reporting may have.

In a limited number of case studies, scholars study the work processes of investigative journalists and their influence on other actors. Protess et al. (1991) distinguish two models: in the linear 'mobilisation model', investigative reporters stimulate the public, create outrage and change public opinion, which finally forces those in power to act (p. 15). However, a different model turned out to be valid: in the 'coalition model', reformative action was taken independently of the public's influence; investigative journalists had built ad hoc coalitions with other societal actors prior to the publication of their stories which eventually led to change. Beyond rare exceptions, (Bratton et al., 2005) Africa lacks this kind of research, mainly due to the fact that empirical media research is still in its nascent stage (Mano, 2009).

The African context

The practice and effects of journalism vary from one cultural and political setting to the next. In particular, the character of political regimes plays an important role for media systems and media content (Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). In most Sub-Saharan African countries, the second wave of democratisation in the 1990s led to the introduction of free elections and multi-party democratic procedures. It also brought new private media and attempts to transform state broadcasters to public service broadcasters (Bussiek, 2013; Hyden and Okigbo, 2002). Although some improvements have been made towards freer media systems, many African countries are still far from being fully established democracies (Tetzlaff and Jakobeit, 2005; Thomson, 2010). The political contexts are dominated by power elites controlling societies in neo-patrimonial settings even under the surface of democratic procedures (Thomson, 2010: 109). Accordingly, media freedom in most countries is still limited. And even in countries with relatively free media systems such as Kenya, violent attacks on media houses by the government can lead to practice of self-censorship (Ismail and Deane, 2008).

Major differences between Francophone and Anglophone media are to be considered. In many cases, Anglophone media work in established markets and in larger companies. They strive to become independent from the state. Francophone media are still small and expect the state to support them, for example, through employing journalists as civil servants (Frère, 2012).

The economic and professional situation in African newsrooms is generally difficult. Media houses have limited means and capacities to support reporters. Brown-envelope journalism is commonplace. Overall, the pre-conditions are not conducive to investigative journalism.

Research design

In order to explore investigative journalism and its effects, the authors have used a qualitative-explorative way of documenting and assessing selected cases. In contrast to other media effects studies, this article

- Investigates and compares a selection of *single stories* and 'their' effects, not aggregated data on meso- or macro level;

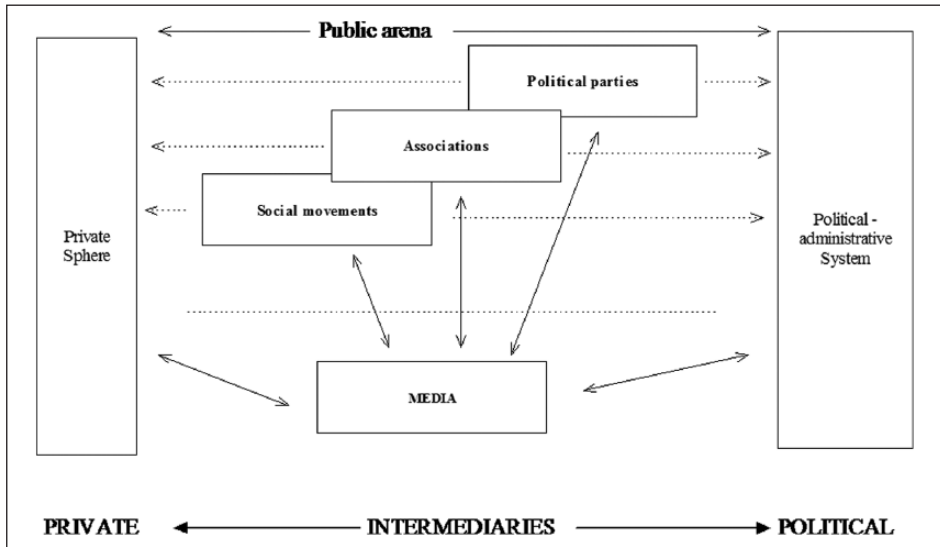


Figure 1. Model by Rucht (2000): The Media's Role as Organizer of Public Discourse.

- Focuses on *immediate reactions to these stories*, either by government or administration, media, political actors or other stakeholders, but *not* on aggregated knowledge increase or behavioural effects;
- Tries to capture the *amount of public debate* after a special story was published, but no long-term audience effects, for example, the intensity of civic participation.

Theoretically, this approach is inspired by two models. First, Rucht's model (Rucht, 2000) on the media's role in political communication in combination with other societal actors describes how political parties, civil society, social movements and media act as intermediaries between citizens and the political system (Figure 1). The different actors organise interests and challenge the political administrative system on behalf of citizens.

The media play an active role in this setting, in particular when they publish investigative reports. They may trigger certain reactions by different actors – including other media outlets. The latter case is called 'media echo' and it may lead to a larger public debate. With Rucht's model, it is possible to analyse the strength and weakness of the different actors and their interplay in order to understand the processes and achievements in the political sphere.

What needs to be clarified, however, beyond the actors is the role the issues (or in journalistic terms: stories) play which investigative journalists pursue, act upon and finally publish. These processes can be further clarified with a second conceptual model originally developed by Peters (2012) for science communication (Figure 2). He uses his 'constructivist model' to analytically structure certain types of communication situations. Any representation of an issue/topic in the public sphere – Peters calls it 'public construct' – is not just a mirror of the original content delivered via media, but is a product of various alterations made by different actions. We here add that the characteristics

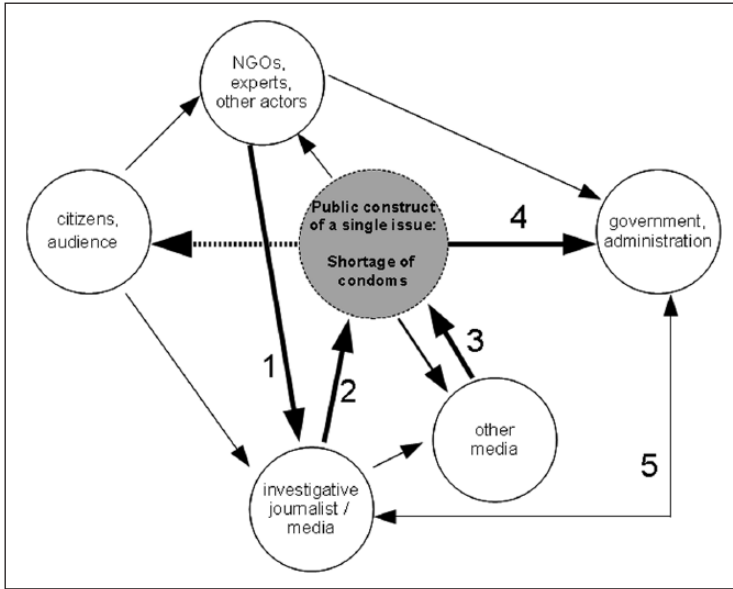


Figure 2. Example for a case of investigative reporting according to the model by Peters (2012): ‘Triggering the urgent delivery of condoms’ (story 1, see index). The most important paths are indicated with thick arrows. The reporter first hears from an NGO about the shortage of condoms in northern Kenya (1). The reporter investigates and then broadcasts TV reports on the issue. A new ‘public construct’ on this specific issue is created (2), which is then reinforced by a ‘media echo’, namely, additional reports by other news outlets, including BBC radio (3). Eventually, the Kenyan government takes action (4). A second example is the case of Buruli ulcer (story 7, see index). Here, a coalition of actors, including the health authorities, is already built and the journalist comes in as a catalyst. In this case, the NGOs and experts (1) as well as the administration (5) support the journalist in creating the public construct they have had in mind already. Similar graphs can be developed for the other stories documented, based on Table 1 and the summaries in the index.

of this public construct might trigger action by stakeholders (government, administration, civil society, scientists) which is contingent upon their relative strength and the salience of the issue at stake. However, Peters’s model does not explain why government policy eventually may change. But it can be used to describe how different actors shape and change the public discourse as well as the action taken on any issue in the public agenda.

In these processes, journalists are often also driven by specific institutional roles that refer to the normative and actual functions of journalism in society. These role models reflect, for example, whether journalists pursue particular missions and are involved, or whether they are detached and neutral. There are various variations and mixes between these two types, as described by Hanitzsch et al. (2011: 275).

On top of this, the journalists’ framing comes into play. Frames can be understood as interpretative envelopes to an issue that is repeatedly invoked. They may help to influence the public construct. A classic example is the scandal-frame: journalists describing

a dramatic situation or problem, naming victims and those responsible. Scheufele (2006) shows that in journalistic routine production, frame-consistent information is preferred over new framings. However, important events can lead to a shift in frames. In strategic communication, the framing of issues plays an integral role in influencing the media, the public and other actors. Successful strategic frames diagnose a problem, propose solutions and motivate for action.

Overall, the models by Rucht and Peters allow for a better conceptualisation on which actors were involved before and after the publication of a particular story, how the framing changed in the course of the events and how the interplay of all factors finally worked for a certain action or reform to take place.

Research questions

Based on these considerations, we formulate the following research questions:

1. What kind of change was achieved by the investigative stories in our sample and how can they be grouped into different types?
2. What are media-specific factors enabling journalists to plan, investigate and publish those stories?
3. Which contextual factors and societal actors were of importance in achieving an impact on change processes and how can their interplay be described?

Sample

The 12 cases of investigative reporting had all been published in national media of five different Sub-Saharan countries (Kenya, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire); one of them had also been published internationally. All stories were published between 2010 and 2012. They were identified within the evaluation of the SjCOOP. Journalists participating in this long-term mentoring project showed a strong will to contribute to social change processes in their countries.² Accordingly, their investigative reports were called 'impact stories'. In the course of the project, a total of 45 of these stories were initially collected. But many of the journalists overestimated the importance of their work, or they were not able to provide the necessary first evidence for impact in the form of documents, or access to contacts. Finally, the evaluation team decided to document 12 stories in depth.³ For 10 of them, an impact could eventually be proven. For two, this was not the case. Nevertheless, these two 'no-impact' stories generated interesting insights, as they can be regarded as counterfactuals from an evaluation point of view.

Brief summaries of the cases are given in the index of this article in order to provide the reader with condensed narratives.

It should be mentioned that the evaluation context, while offering certain richness in material, was also a limiting factor. The authors could not set up an ideal research design with exactly defined variations in political context or different degrees of media freedom. Instead, they had to work with the identified impact stories and the contexts in which they had evolved. Nonetheless, this article attempts to go beyond single cases,

generates comparative insights and develops tentative hypotheses on the effects of investigative journalism in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Methodology

For each story, we went through a two-step analysis. First, a structured documentation of the journalistic work and the societal processes around the publications was put together, including fact-checking of the time-line of events around the story. The media echo was assessed and the effects of the story on other actors were confirmed. In particular, it was checked whether the impact on policy, administration or public debate in question could be linked to the story.

Second, we used these findings to elaborate a typology of different kinds of changes. We tried to relate the stories' effects with media-specific factors (e.g. Who supported the journalistic research? What role model were journalists following?), as well as with outside factors or actors within the political sphere (see Rucht's model) and the evolution of the public constructs in question (see Peters' model) – thereby trying to understand which processes caused impact.

Results

Four types of investigative stories

Overall, the stories presented here deal with urgent matters that affect large parts of the population: problems in health systems, environmental dangers, major difficulties for farmers and human rights violations. When comparing the different achievements of these investigative stories, that is, their impact on societal change processes, we can identify four different types:

1. *Getting an important issue on the public agenda.* Several of our stories work by getting a topic first to public attention. The administration then knows that the public is aware and, in some cases at least, it acts.
2. *Helping to solve an immediate problem.* There are several cases where this was achieved – the delivery of condoms, bed nets, tuberculosis (TB) drugs and CD4 machines.
3. *Triggering structural changes.* Of course, short-term action is easier to achieve than changes in government policies. In only a few cases were structural changes achieved: in the case of the Buruli ulcer infection (story 7), a new policy was issued; after the delivery of weather station equipment (10), the administration now offers a forecasting service on national TV stations as a news ticker. For other stories, this kind of impact was intended but could not be achieved: the story on the state of health centres, for example, was able to achieve better drug delivery but not hiring of more nurses and doctors.
4. *Supporting science uptake.* Only the weather forecast story (10) clearly helped to convey scientific information to the public. Other stories (5 and 7) had this potential, but here the reporters were not focusing on knowledge transfer into society.

Media-specific factors

The SjCOOP participants worked in very different newsrooms and media environments. But all of them developed a strong professional and often also personal interest in helping to change a particular situation. Most of them pursued these stories for more than a week, along with more short-term work.⁴

The impact stories were mostly published on comparably competitive African media markets. Kenya and Uganda in East Africa and also Cameroon and Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa are among the few countries where there are several news media which make a serious effort to win their audiences, for example, through special sections in the newspapers or specialised beats covering health and environment science. Apparently, this competitive environment is an encouragement for journalists to look for exclusive stories.

As expected, the economic support from newsrooms for travel, accommodation or phone-cards was very limited. Only in the case of story 4 did the editor-in-chief finance the reporter's research trip. In stories 1, 4 and 6, the reporters received travel funding from media non-governmental organisations (NGOs), scientists and a United Nation (UN) organisation, respectively. In the other cases, only smaller travel expenses were needed. So journalists can in fact overcome some of the limitations of their media systems by support from media-external actors, such as NGOs or international donors.

The frames used in the impact stories are not uniform, as one might expect. Instead, they seem to be tailored to the context. In four cases, the journalists were the first to investigate an issue and thus had the opportunity to establish the first framing, thereby setting the 'public construct': condoms (1), CD4 machines (2), malaria (4) and abduction of women (6). Here, the journalists describe a concrete problem, give a voice to victims or persons concerned, include statements by the officials and suggest how the problem could be solved. In three stories, the framings differed from what had been established earlier in the public: story 5 (*Striga* weed) clarifies a misconception by many farmers. Story 7 (Buruli ulcer) focuses for the first time on a positive angle towards the potential of a specialised hospital. Story 8 (toxic waste) offers an entirely new and controversial frame of a publicly well-established issue. In two cases (health clinics and weather forecasting), the framing and presumably the public constructs changed after the first publications, due to new events. Thus, it seems that a change in framing helps if an issue is already well-established.

In our cases, different role models for journalists can be identified. For some impact stories, the reporters go beyond their usual role as pure information providers. In stories 3 (health centres) and 9 (TB), the reporters became deeply involved. They supported campaigns, used scandal frames and went on 'crusades' by publishing several articles. We may therefore call them *activist-reformers*. Two other journalists took up another role: the *change agent*. This role is somewhat more quiet and diplomatic and corresponds to complex changes. The change agents were seeking partners who would work with them beyond the publication of their own article – specifically towards change and research uptake. And they did it without provoking outrage: for example, the journalist who reported on the Buruli ulcer disease clearly had in mind that he could help improve the situation simply by speaking to all the experts involved. Later, an NGO took up the issue and pushed for change.

Context-specific factors for achieving impact

Our initial hypothesis for context specific factors is that impact stories first provoke a media echo which then leads to broader public discussion on the issue. This discussion then might encourage actors such as NGOs or civil society to take up an issue. Whether an impact can be achieved then depends on the government, its authoritarian character and its willingness to respond to those claims.

And indeed in most of our impact stories (1–3, 8–10), a media echo was an important element – in the form of a simple agenda setting effect. The most prominent case was the lack of condoms (story 1) which was not only picked up by local media but also by the BBC Radio in Kenya who covered the story and by Citizen TV, the station with the largest audience in Kenya, who joined in to further add to the public construct of this issue.

But in other stories, no media echo was provoked and yet some changes were triggered. In the malaria story, the health administration had reacted directly after the publication of the article without further reports being published. Also in the cases of the abduction of women and Buruli ulcer, no media echo occurred. It seems that a single publication was sufficient. We can thus conclude that generally media echo matters, but in certain cases it does not. If relevant actors are already willing to act, a single report may suffice to trigger change.

It should also be noted that a number of different societal actors were actively involved during the course of impact stories. Local administration occasionally reacted very quickly. They changed the supply of drugs directly following media reports. Surprisingly, these cases were observed in Uganda, a country known for limited political freedom and the authoritarian character of its regime. Apparently, this kind of regime needs public legitimacy and an administration looking efficient.

Based on these observations, we can formulate the hypothesis that change processes might be easier to achieve on minor issues which do not question the survival of the regime but rather support its legitimacy. Thus, reporting on critical questions and achieving impact looks even possible in restrictive settings, but only with reporting on less system-sensitive issues, such as health, water and agriculture, but definitely not on political freedom as such.

Sometimes, if responsiveness by the government is not very strong, other stakeholders might step in. In several cases, NGOs first initiated the story, later picked it up from the media and advanced it to higher levels of debate and action. The hypothesis here is that in restricted media systems the media outlets are often too weak to achieve an impact on their own, but need to get support from others.

Table 1 illustrates four different kinds of interplay between media and other actors which we identified around impact stories. This overview shows that the sequence is mostly but not always a linear process: publishing story – generating media echo – triggering change activities.

In the cases where the government or administration acted, they had very often already prepared themselves prior to the publication. This then made it possible to quickly take action. But there are clear limits: when it comes to larger changes involving major financial burdens, quick solutions are much more unlikely.

Table 1. Four types of interplay between different actors/factors around the publication of an investigative report.

	Activities			Impact	Examples (story no.)
	Initiative by NGO	Coalition of different actors	Story researched and published by journalist		
Type 1	(1)		(2)	Administration acts	Condoms, health centres, tuberculosis (1, 3, 9)
Type 2		(1)	(2)	Further measures are taken by several actors	Abduction of women, Buruli ulcer (6, 7)
Type 3			(1)	Administration solves problem quickly	CD4 machines, malaria, <i>Striga</i> (2, 4, 5)
Type 4			(1)	Important public debate/reaction by government	Toxic waste, weather forecast (8, 10)

NGO: non-governmental organisation.

(1) = first activity, (2) = second, (3) = third. Type 1: an NGO informs the journalist about a problem, the report is followed by a media echo; Type 2: different actors form an ad hoc coalition to solve a problem, the story is published and upon this occasion first steps towards a solution of the problem are taken, no further media echo; Type 3: a journalist finds a new story/framing, no media echo or other activities; Type 4: a journalist finds a new story/framing, the first report is followed by a large media echo.

It helps a lot to advance an issue if it is initiated or taken up by other actors, such as NGOs, experts or the people concerned. Also at this point the no-impact stories can sharpen our insight. Story 11 on science funding in Africa – although prominently placed in ‘Nature’ and in several national media – had no repercussions. Apparently, there were no other societal actors ready to put pressure on governments. Also story 12 (‘farmer fighting the desert’) only provoked limited reactions in different ministries which in the end led to nothing. Here, an already active NGO could have helped.

Interestingly, there is also the possibility that impact is achieved without any public discussion at all. NGOs, government, international agencies and the journalists may simply communicate among themselves. We hypothesise that in this case action is taken based on the expectation of a potential public debate. One example is the report on the abduction of women (6) that was mainly discussed between international agencies and government offices. Thus, it gained momentum within political circles even before publication. In fact, a coalition between journalists and agencies was built. It triggered action towards issuing an in-depth expert study which was then supposed to prepare the next step: concrete action.

So in specific cases, ad hoc coalitions might work as described by Protesse et al. (1991), if journalists use the right window of opportunity. But unlike Protesse we did not see in our sample any cases of journalists threatening to create an outrage and, at the same time, cooperating with other actors towards a sustainable solution.

Conclusion

Summing up, we have identified a typology of four different kinds of impact: (a) getting an important issue on the public agenda, (b) helping to solve an immediate problem, (c) triggering structural changes and (d) supporting uptake of science. It is evident that triggering structural changes is more difficult to achieve (due to political complexity) than just getting an issue on the public agenda.

Furthermore, we have developed five hypotheses on how investigative reports in Africa might have an impact in the real world:

- *A sound media echo seems to be very helpful.* All stories of the type ‘triggering structural changes’ seem to have required a good media echo, as well as most stories of the ‘helping to solve an immediate problem’ type – although, of course, a proof of causation cannot be claimed here. A strong correlation between media echo and change processes in these cases is further supported by the fact that all no-impact stories suffered (beyond other factors) from the lack of achieving further media stories. Nevertheless, media echo was not always necessary, and it is still unknown how this ‘silent’ triggering impact works.
- *Participation of other actors can advance the case.* In many health impact stories, it were NGOs that first direct the attention of journalists to specific problems. General public or specific groups (protesters for example) can also have a strong influence. The phenomenon is well-known: media and civil society can mutually support each other (Spurk, 2007). This hypothesis would explain how journalists working in weak media systems in Africa can overcome their limitations by

cooperating with other societal stakeholders and confront the government with their demands. This path looks especially promising when the issues raised are of no serious threat to those in power.

- *Responsiveness of governments and administration is a very important factor.* In almost all health cases, governments reacted quite quickly (within a few days or weeks) and solved at least the part that could be solved immediately. The hypothesis is that administrations in East Africa use the media for this type of surveillance to detect shortcomings in administrative procedures. This might be especially important for authoritarian regimes that can rather easily give better services and thus raise their reputation with the general public – while avoiding criticism about their general governance. *Impact can be triggered when media reports use the right framing.* It takes the setting of a specific frame when an issue is being established for the first time, but changing the frame when the issue is already well-known.
- *Ad hoc coalitions between media, government and other societal stakeholders can be built to advance issues.* We have observed in a few cases that these coalitions work beyond the linear course of events (story → media echo → pressure on government), and they can work even without public debate on the issue.

Based on these insights, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. Investigative journalism holds great potential for societies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Its processes and its effects need to be better understood. Our hypotheses (see above) can be a good starting point for larger research efforts.
2. Media organisations and investigative journalists are important actors but they should not be looked at in isolation. In many cases, they can overcome their weaknesses in advancing important issues through support from other societal stakeholders. As described by the models developed by Rucht and Peters, it is the media being embedded into the entire deliberation process, their interplay with other actors and the dynamic process of framing public constructs which can to a large extent explain why and how certain changes can be achieved or not.
3. The processes of investigative journalism in Africa seem to be different from the model put forward by Protesse et al. (1991). The cases studied in this article are somewhat simpler in their structure, and solutions are often found in a more straightforward, cooperative way. The mere threat of public outrage as observed in the United States does not seem to work here. In our sample, the reporters focused more on identifying faulty systems and processes which the government need to address, and the journalists made sure they advanced their cases in cooperation with other actors.
4. Journalists in Sub-Saharan Africa work in specific cultural and political contexts, and investigative journalism is adapted to this environment. Our cases have shown that they are not necessarily engaged with the unveiling of secrets and wrongdoings related to powerful actors. Instead, their focus is on support for reform and change, and they sometimes take over the roles of activist-reformers or change agents. This result supports Hanitzsch's et al. (2011) findings that

journalists from non-Western contexts ‘tend to be more interventionists in their role perceptions’ (p. 273).

In general, African investigative reporters are primarily inspired to collect relevant information from other actors, but then dig deeper than is usual, sometimes forming coalitions with relevant actors, hoping to trigger change. In these processes, NGOs and other actors play a key role –by drawing the journalist’s attention to an urgent issue that needs to be addressed and by providing necessary information. This kind of engagement and support seems vital since African journalists encounter numerous difficulties in their everyday work: major financial problems, resource constraints in the newsrooms and difficulties in getting access to sources and background information. So their interest is not necessarily to reveal major scandals, such as the phone hacking scandal in the United Kingdom. Rather, African investigative journalists tackle problems that more directly affect the lives of ordinary people. These problems can generally be identified quickly and are often solved with the involvement of the right alliances.

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Notes

1. The SjCOOP was managed by the World Federation of Science Journalists. It worked with around 140 journalists from 40 different countries in Africa and the Arab World (Lublinski et al., 2014). Investigative stories were initially an unexpected outcome of a first project phase (Mbarga et al., 2012: 167).
2. More than 80% of participants expressed that ‘achieving policy change’, ‘promoting science as a means for change’ and ‘showing science bears solutions for societal problems’ were tasks of science journalism (Schanne and Spurk, 2011).
3. As part of the SjCOOP evaluations, several cases of Arab investigative journalism were also analysed.
4. Six reporters used the help of mentors from the SjCOOP who gave advice in the development of the story. One reporter was supported in the newsroom by a mentor from another media development project. The others stressed that they had done the work without external help.

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Appendix I

Index of cases of investigative reporting studied

Story 1: Triggering the urgent delivery of condoms, Kenya. A 14-minute TV report on the Kenyan channel K24 revealed for the first time to the public that there was a shortage of

free condoms. This problem was very acute in northern parts of the country and led to so far unheard-of practices for protection against HIV/AIDS, like washing and re-using condoms or using plastic bags instead of condoms. The journalist first heard from an NGO about this issue. After her report the story was picked up by numerous other news media. The Red Cross started emergency shipments to the region immediately after the issue was broadcast on BBC radio. Later, the Kenyan government ordered more condoms and parliamentarians debated donor dependency. A big public debate on shortage, causes and actions to be taken followed. (Violet Otindo 'The Price of Protection', K24, 24 and 27 February 2011.)

Story 2: Triggering the delivery of CD4 machines for HIV patients, Uganda. A reporter with the daily paper 'New Vision' published a story on difficulties HIV/AIDS patients faced in Uganda. In order to receive the right dosage in anti-retroviral drugs, they needed to know their immune system status which is measured by a CD4 machine. The single machine used in that region often did not work. So patients had to travel long distances for their tests and were at risk of not getting their medication. Two weeks after the initial report a new CD4 machine was donated to the district hospital which is very close to many of those concerned. This action was generally in line with the government's plans to decentralise health services. The articles by the journalist helped to speed up the process in this specific case.

(Hope Mafranga 'CD4 count test fees shoot up', *New Vision*, 29 November 2010.)

*Story 3: Improving supplies for health centres, parliamentary debate on maternal mortality, Uganda. An article in the daily 'New Vision' described the lack of medical supplies, transport facilities and the shortage of medical personnel – nurses and doctors – in a specific Health Centre in Mbarara district in rural Uganda. This article was inspired during visits to health centres that were organised during a journalism training course by a health-oriented NGO. The author of the article had been hired as a trainer but later decided to do a story herself, too. About a week later another newspaper, the 'Daily Monitor', published another story on the death of a pregnant woman who was denied treatment. It caused a public outcry, parliamentary debate and immediate reactions by the government: The system for delivery of supplies for the health centres was improved. (Hope Mafranga 'Uganda health centers in a sorry state', *New Vision*, 29 November 2010.)*

*Story 4: Delivery of anti-malaria drugs and bed nets, Uganda. In the 'Daily Monitor', a special report appeared on the situation of malaria patients in the Apac community north of Kampala, Uganda. There were major public health difficulties and a shortage of supplies of drugs and bed nets in this area which is, according to statistics cited in the article, the community most heavily affected worldwide by malaria. The National Medical Stores (NMS) reacted directly to this single publication and improved the supply of bed nets and drugs. The administrative system of the NMS had only recently been re-structured in such a way that it could react quickly to reports on problems by the news media. (Lominda Afedraru 'Malaria vaccine only hope for Apac', *Daily Monitor*, 9 April 2011.)*

Story 5: Accelerating government plans to fight Striga weed, Uganda. *In an article for the 'Daily Monitor', a reporter described Striga weed, a common parasitic weed in East Africa's agriculture, and the damage it does to important cereal crops, like maize and sorghum. Many farmers are not aware of the problem and believe Striga is just a pretty flower. After the article appeared, the head of the crop protection department in the Ministry of Agriculture set up a team of agricultural field inspectors to assess the extent of Striga infestation in Uganda. This first study had already been planned before the publication of the article, with funding from an NGO, but yielded only rough figures. The necessary funds for more in-depth research had not been allocated at the time. The fresh newspaper report helped to kick-start this larger research project. (Lominda Afedraru 'Striga Weed, the African Farmers Enemy'; Daily Monitor, 19 October 2011.)*

Story 6: Supporting action against the abduction of women, Burkina Faso. *A reporter with the 'Sidwaya' newspaper published an article about women who were kidnapped and forced to marry against their will, a practice that is widely tolerated by the Gurma people in eastern Burkina Faso. He had carried out this investigation at the request of the United Nations Population Fund. The organisation cooperated intensively with the reporter as it wanted to use his article to mobilise partners for a larger scale study that would enable the Fund to put this problem in its next action program. After the article appeared, an anthropologist was appointed for a first pilot study into the issue. The article played a key role in getting this process going. (Boureima Sanga 'Vol des femmes à l'Est du Burkina', Sidwaya, 15 March 2012.)*

Story 7: Setting up a new policy for treatment of the Buruli ulcer infection, Cameroon. *In the daily 'Quotidien Mutations', a reporter did a background article on the disease Buruli ulcer, a chronic infection that can lead to dramatic disfigurement and disability. The reporter told the stories of two patients and detailed the activities of an international research team. During his investigation, the reporter was in touch with several actors: doctors in the town of Ayo, municipal officials and a Swiss NGO. The latter seized on this initiative and pushed for action. Eventually, the treatment was improved: a committee for specific tropical diseases was founded which issued directives for the management of Buruli ulcer. The hospital in Ayo was renovated and became the national hospital of reference for the disease. (Léger Ntiga 'Ulcère de Buruli – Comment des chirurgiens réparent des vies à Ayo', Quotidien Mutations, 25 May 2011.)*

Story 8: Raising public awareness about dealing with toxic waste, Cote d'Ivoire. *Six years after the toxic waste dumping in Abidjan by the Probo Koala cargo vessel in 2006, two reporters with 'Fraternité Matin' chose to go back to the story and dig deeper. They had noticed that people in the waste dump area were apparently living normally, without the expected health problems or abnormal death rates. Their investigations led them to discover that international reports had been kept hidden by the government. These reports stated that the waste was not toxic but rather suggested preventive analysis of the water and the soil in the future. The reporters also found corruption, flaws in contracts and financial abuses. Other news media went on to report irregularities in the management of the toxic waste dump. The president later dismissed one of his ministers. Overall, these reports*

raised public awareness that certain things had gone wrong. However, the government chose not to reopen investigations into the matter. (Ghislaine Atta, Jules Claver Aka 'Déchets toxiques', *Fraternité Matin*, 7 and 12 April 2012.)

Story 9: Mitigating shortages in anti-tuberculosis drug delivery, Cameroon. A reporter with the daily 'Le Jour' was informed by an NGO about shortages in tuberculosis drug delivery in Cameroon. However, the authorities did not want to admit that there was a problem. But when the reporter took the opportunity to directly question the person in charge at a forum with the Cameroonian Association of Science Journalists, the first article on shortages was published, other articles followed and finally the health minister acted. As a result, not only was the supply problem solved but also a long-term solution was reached through an assistance agreement with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. This agreement was already being negotiated at the time. But it was the new reports that made the different actors advance quickly. (Adrienne Engono 'Tuberculeux sans médicaments', *Le Jour*, 17 October 2011.)

Story 10: Improving national weather forecasting to help farmers, Cameroon. In March 2012, a reporter featured farmers being unable to plant their crops during the right periods, because of the absence of reliable weather forecasts. With her article in the daily 'Le Jour', she drew the attention of officials to this problem, urging them to take action – but in the end nothing was done about the problem. Five months later, floods hit Cameroon due to heavy rain. The impact of this disaster would have been less dramatic if meteorological installations in the country had been functioning properly. The reporter wrote about this connection for her new employer, the daily 'Quotidien Mutations'. A few months later, the United Nations Development Program started distributing new forecast technology to the weather stations of Cameroon. Although this action cannot be attributed to the journalist's report alone, it is evident that she made which actions needed to be taken publicly known. The farmers now receive better weather forecasts and warnings. (Adrienne Engono 'La météo fait encore défaut', *Le Jour*, 26 March 2012, and 'Le Cameroun perd la notion du beau temps', *Quotidien Mutations* 19 September 2012.)

Story 11: Problems of science funding in Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Rwanda (no impact). In 2011 in the renowned science journal 'Nature', an international team of journalists published various stories on the current status of science funding within their countries. The most newsworthy content was the Ugandan government's decision not to hand in another request for grants from the World Bank's Millennium Science Initiative (MSI). In the previous 4 years, the organisation had financed the larger part of operational research in Uganda. Although these findings were also published in national papers and on TV, the action taken by other actors (media, scientists, government, politicians) turned out to be very limited, if at all existent. (Vivienne Irikefe, Gayathri Vaidyanathan, Linda Nordling, Aimable Twahira, Esther Nakkazi, Richard Monastersky: 'The view from the front line', *Nature*, 30 June 2011. Vol. 474, 556–559.)

Story 12: Supporting a farmer who fights the desert, Burkina Faso (no impact). A reporter with the newspaper 'Sidwaya' told the story of a man who planted a forest in order to

save an area in the region of Gourga from desertification. Despite all the efforts he made to create an area rich in biodiversity, the farmer, given the title 'man who stopped the desert', was about to lose part of this land. The government wanted to use it for a housing project. This story had already been covered by international media before the reporter looked into it. The news story led to limited reaction by the authorities: some meetings were held between the different ministries concerned. But no concrete action was taken. (Boureima Sanga: 'Le fou qui arrête le desert', Sidwaya, 15 June 2011.)