



WHAT'S NEW?

NEWS FROM FONDATION HIRONDELLE | NUMBER 54 | WINTER 2017-2018



Radio listeners in Mali
© Fondation Hironnelle / Mamadou Ouattara

From audience to impact

Verifying if the public listens to a news bulletin or a programme, trying to understand what listeners like and why – these are all constant concerns of Fondation Hironnelle. In 2010 we initiated the Caux seminar, which brought some 30 international players together in Switzerland to discuss how to “measure the impact of media in crisis zones”. Since then, the Fondation has been continually improving its approach and methods for measuring the impact of its projects on populations. The first aim is to verify that we are correctly meeting our objectives, but also to be able to respond to our operational and financial partners, who need to be able to justify the support they provide to us. When people ask me “What is the impact of your media?” I often respond with an anecdote from Bamako, Bangui or Kinshasa, saying that if when I arrive in a country where we produce and broadcast radio programmes and get into a taxi where the driver is listening to us, then I know we are on the right track! But today, that answer is not enough. We need to demonstrate not only that people listen to us, watch us and read us, but also what impact that has. That second part of the question is more complicated. It needs the concerted efforts of organizations working in media, of researchers and donors, to develop and refine evaluation methods that are recognized and applicable, including in the most fragile contexts.

Caroline Vuillemin,
CEO



Radio listener in Kinshasa (DR Congo) © Fondation Hironnelle / Gwenn Dubourthoumieu

MEASURING THE UTILITY OF INFORMATION

The influence of media has for the past century been the subject of more and more refined scientific observations. Demonstrating the impact of news and programmes on a given audience nevertheless continues to be a subject of debate.

What is the impact of media? This question, reignited by the influence of social media on election campaigns, has been around for a century. The first communication science studies came in the 1920s and 1930s. Harold Dwight Laswell's work *Propaganda Techniques in the (First) World War* (1927) and on the contexts of revolution, big strikes and the emergence of radio, helped fashion both a vision and practice of media, presumed to produce mass effect on a society largely viewed as passive and uneducated. However, after the Second World there emerged another theory of “limited effect”. Founded on the empirical observations of Paul Lazarsfeld's Bureau of Applied Social Research at the University of Columbia (New York), it found that voting is influenced less by media messages than by messages from “opinion leaders” in which a voter already has trust, and that voters are likely to reject media messages that go against their convictions.

This research, much developed in the United States, has often been led by commercial interests (impact of advertising) or political interests (impact of election campaigns). Over the decades, its methodology has been refined to include contributions from sociology and psychology. The “contingent” theory – according to which media have different effects according to their audience, seen as so many receptors of information in a complex cognitive process – seems to be the most widely accepted today. It raises a vast number of questions on the impact of media projects. Of what use is independent, impartial information? Can it improve people's lives and, if so, how and for how long? Can it help people learn to live together in a broken society? These are so many pressing questions, all the more so in crisis situations where the media sector is itself fragile.

New Studio Kalangou survey

Since January 2016, Studio Kalangou has been producing two hours of radio programming composed of news bulletins, features on the daily lives of Niger's citizens and a big debate programme. The programmes, piloted by Fondation Hironnelle and produced in Niamey, are broadcast on a network of some 30 partner radios in all the regions of Niger.

Are Studio Kalangou's listeners more interested in politics? Do they understand their institutions better? Are they aware of the opportunities to take part in collective decisions, and do they take them? These are some of the questions that will be asked by American researcher Jeff Conroy-Krutz, associate professor at the political science department of Michigan State University, in a survey he will conduct in Niger over five months in 2018. He is introducing two new aspects of methodology, designed to increase the reliability of results: the groups studied will be chosen randomly from a large section of Niger's population, not just Kalangou listeners; and participants, who will be observed in their real-life listening conditions, will at broadcast time be encouraged to listen either to Kalangou, or a "placebo" programme with which it will be compared.



A Tunisian family listening to the radio in Kasserine (Tunisia), June 2015 © Fondation Hironnelle / Gwenn Dubourthoumieu

PROVING THE IMPACT OF WHAT WE DO

Sacha Meuter, legal adviser and research coordinator at **Fondation Hironnelle** headquarters (Lausanne), explains the Fondation's policy on measuring the quantitative and qualitative impact of its media.

Why is research on the impact of media so important for Fondation Hironnelle?

Sacha Meuter: In a global context of suspicion towards the media, public and private partners are asking us more and more often to prove the effects of our action. So we must develop tools to measure how much impartial news and information produced by the media we support really helps make crisis-hit societies more peaceful. In addition, knowing our audience and their reactions to our programmes helps us develop what we are doing through media, in line with our objectives in the countries concerned. That requires measuring our audience: who listens to us, when, why and what effect does it have on their lives?

What tools have you developed for measuring impact?

Surveys that we have commissioned from specialized companies detail the media environment in the countries where we work and situate Fondation Hironnelle media within this environment. These surveys help us identify media consumption patterns and local audience profiles according to criteria that include age, sex, place of residence and socio-professional category. As well as these quantitative indications, there are also qualitative evaluations through focus groups composed of some of our listeners in different towns.

We ask them what do you think of such and such a programme, why, what would you like to see, and so on. In addition, we also collaborate actively with studies on our media by independent researchers, funded by third parties, which are generally academic. Such studies, based on scientific methodology and carried out over a longer period of time, give us more in-depth and precise information.

Can you give us a concrete example?

In his work *Convincing Rebel Fighters to Disarm* (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017), Nigerian researcher Jacob Udo-Udo Jacob compares the impact on people in the Kivu provinces of eastern DR Congo of MONUSCO¹ communication programmes encouraging FDLR² militia to return to the country and Radio Okapi's informative debate programme "Dialogue between Congolese" at a time, between 2008 and 2010, when Fondation Hironnelle was co-managing that radio station with the UN. He concluded that the UN communication programmes provoked emotional reactions that were not very favourable, while "Dialogue between Congolese" gave its listeners a better understanding of the political situation and a sense of collective responsibility to resolve the conflict.

1 - United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo.

2 - Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, an armed group initially made up of Hutu militia involved in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

WHAT'S NEW?



Christoph Spurk (left) leading a workshop with Studio Tamani team in Bamako (Mali) in 2016 © Fondation Hironnelle / Nicolas Boissez

THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION DEPENDS ON ITS QUALITY

For more than 15 years, **Christoph Spurk**, lecturer and researcher at the **Institute of Applied Media Studies** (Zurich University of Applied Sciences), has been evaluating media projects in developing or crisis countries.

How can the impact of a media outlet be measured, especially the quality and usefulness of news and information for the population concerned?

Christoph Spurk: Within a media project, the first thing we recommend is to measure the quality of the reporting. Then, if that information is good enough, you have a good chance of being able to assess its effect on the audience. But how do you measure the quality of news and information? At the Institute of Applied Media Studies, we have developed a tool to identify within a piece of journalistic output (e.g. article, radio programme) criteria related to quality, such as diversity of sources, diversity of perspectives, existence of opposing viewpoints, and provision of context. The piece is evaluated on each criterion and the scores put into a spreadsheet, which gives an overall evaluation. Studies on Tanzanian media show for example that in many newspapers more than 40% of articles had only one source (or none) and only 9% of the articles mentioned opposing viewpoints. Evaluation of the quality of reporting is based on those kinds of statistics.

To measure the impact of the media information produced, we then conduct surveys with target groups. Ideally we ask about their perceptions and behaviour before and after listening to the programme that is being evaluated. This demands time: the effect of media on perception or behaviour is long-term. It takes years to materialize, if at all. These effects should be

measured in comparison with control groups that do not listen to the media in question but have similar social, cultural and economic characteristics to its listeners. Then we can measure the specific impact of that programme.

What are the specificities of measuring media impact in crisis contexts?

In crisis contexts, we face two major challenges. First, reality changes often and rapidly. People suffer traumas. Their perception of reality is volatile. Second, there are practical difficulties to access people and areas we need to reach. Indeed, media surveys demand time and some stability which is lacking during a conflict.

In 2016, for instance, we conducted a survey on Studio Tamani, Fondation Hironnelle's radio project in Mali. We achieved quite specific results: in its news bulletins, Studio Tamani succeeds in reporting comprehensively about the conflict (much more than other radio stations) and including diverse sources and viewpoints, but it rarely puts its information in context. On the other hand, its "Grand Dialogue" programme gives guests – who often disagree with each other – a simple but crucial opportunity to clearly explain their views. That somehow compensates for the missing background in news.

In addition, the study shows that listening to Studio Tamani makes its audience more likely to favour dialogue as a solution to conflicts.

Coordinating the efforts of media organizations

The Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) is a network of journalism support and media assistance groups established in 2005. The GFMD's core value is to support the creation and strengthening of journalism and free, independent, sustainable and pluralistic news ecosystems, as defined by the declarations of UNESCO. Its main focus is to ensure proper collaboration as well as an exchange of information and experience among its members with a view to creating a strong, independent and pluralistic media environment, which contributes to the development of empowered societies. GFMD currently has an active membership of around 190 organisations in some 70 countries. Its secretariat is based in Brussels. Fondation Hironnelle has been a member of GFMD since 2013.

GFMD has a unique, neutral and trusted position which allows it to bring together all the major actors in media development, local and regional media assistance groups and the representatives of nascent media sectors to reach a common understanding of needs and priorities. It has, for example, successfully advocated for the inclusion in 2015 of Access to Information in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Promoting and disseminating research and analysis on the impact of media in social and economic development is one of the aims of GFMD. It currently coordinates several initiatives and efforts to improve evaluation standards and define new consensual methodologies for media impact. Fondation Hironnelle participates in these efforts, together with other media development organisations such as BBC Media Action, Free Press Unlimited, International Media Support, Canal France International, Internews and Deutsche Welle Akademie.



Demonstration against the new telecommunications law, Yangon (Myanmar), January 2017 © AFP

“DOH ATHAN”, A PODCAST ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN MYANMAR

Since October 18, Frontier Myanmar has been producing a new weekly podcast on human rights, developed in partnership with Fondation Hironnelle.

In this 15-minute audio programme posted online in the Burmese language (and once a month in English), Frontier Myanmar journalists explain what human rights are and how they affect everyone in Myanmar. A voice is given to the public and to experts. “*Very few people here understand what human rights are and it often remains a taboo subject,*” says Martyn Brown, journalist and Fondation Hironnelle advisor overseeing production of the podcast.

The production of this programme, in a very sensitive context in Myanmar, is part of a partnership between private media group Frontier Myanmar and Fondation Hironnelle, supported by the embassy of the Netherlands.

The aim is to cover issues that are not covered by the main media in Myanmar, and give a voice to all components of society. “*The name Doh Athan (Our Voice) was chosen to give a voice to the people of Myanmar,*” says Martyn Brown. “*We want to hear untold stories from all corners of this ethnically diverse, complex country.*” Fondation Hironnelle trained the Frontier Myanmar team and helps produce the programme. Further workshops are planned to support ethnic media in the country.

The programme is broadcast on the website frontiermyanmar.net, on Facebook, Soundcloud, YouTube and iTunes. It will soon be broadcast in several regions by local partner media.

SPECIAL COVERAGE OF COP23

Hironnelle journalists from Mali and Central African Republic cover COP23 in Bonn.

Building on the diplomatic success of the last two international summits on climate change, the main aim of the COP23 was to determine concrete mechanisms for applying the Paris accords that were signed at the COP21 in 2015. At issue was implementing each country's commitments on keeping global warming this century below 2° Celsius. COP23 took place in Bonn, Germany, and was chaired by Fiji, a Pacific island State that is one of the places most threatened by rising sea levels.

Fondation Hironnelle set up a team of three journalists for the duration of the summit: an

editor and two journalists from its media in Mali (Studio Tamani) and the Central African Republic (Radio Ndeke Luka). Each day they produced articles, videos and audio content. They covered what was going on at the COP23, and offered feature programmes on the issues of adapting to climate change, which directly affect the people of West and Central Africa. These productions have been broadcast on Fondation Hironnelle media and partner radio networks in Mali and the Central African Republic, as well as on our websites and social media pages.

Nobel prize winner joins Hironnelle Board

Mrs. Ouided Bouchamaoui has joined Fondation Hironnelle's Board. Her appointment was officially approved at the Board's annual meeting on November 30, 2017. Ouided Bouchamaoui is a Tunisian businesswoman and president of the Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Crafts (UTICA) since 2011. UTICA is a member of the national dialogue quartet in Tunisia. This quartet won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015 for their successful mediation which led to presidential and legislative elections as well as the ratification in 2014 of a new Constitution for the country that launched the “Arab Spring”. Ouided Bouchamaoui received the Nobel Prize on behalf of UTICA. Since then she has dedicated herself to various initiatives for peace and justice in Tunisia and elsewhere in the world. She was guest of honour at the March 2017 ceremony in Geneva to award Fondation Hironnelle the Ousseimi Prize for Tolerance, and spoke about the role of independent news media in a context of democratic transition. Ouided Bouchamaoui wanted to continue her support for Fondation Hironnelle in a more active way. She thus joins the Board, which oversees all our action and has ultimate responsibility to ensure that the Fondation's activities are in line with its statutory mission.

Fondation Hironnelle is a Swiss non-profit organization founded in 1995, which provides information to populations faced with crisis, empowering them in their daily lives and as citizens. Since its creation Fondation Hironnelle, based in Lausanne, has worked in 18 countries on three continents.

Impressum

What's New ?
Quarterly publication
of Fondation Hironnelle

Managing Editor:
Caroline Vuillemin

Design and editing:
Nicolas Boissez
Benjamin Bibas / la fabrique documentaire

Translation:
Julia Crawford

Avenue du Temple 19C
1012 Lausanne, Suisse

hironnelle.org
info@hironnelle.org
T. + 41 21 654 20 20

Crédit Suisse AG
IBAN: CH05 0483 5041 8522 8100 5