

Institute of Applied Media Studies IAM

Result chains – one way of evaluating impact in projects supporting media

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Observations

- **High ambitions regarding effects of media interventions**
 - On democracy / good governance
 - On violent conflict and peace processes
- **Two major challenges**
 - Media effects theory says direct and strong effects are rather difficult to achieve
 - Good evidence of impacts of media projects is in short supply, partly due to inappropriate methods.

The lack of evidence

- **Personal Observations:**

- Many projects lack proper impact evaluation
- If there are more funds, programme managers prefer to enlarge existing projects, and not to invest in evaluation.
- Evaluation is often limited to interview experts
- Uncertainty about evaluation methods

- **Research based observations**

- Schoemaker & Stremlau (2014): «*Evidence of impact of media interventions is scarce at best*»; «*serious gaps*» in methodologies
- Gagliardone et al. (2016): «*Evidence on successful use of ICTs to promote peacebuilding is thin*»

The methodological challenges

- **Randomized control trial (RCT)**

(a) gold standard, but not easy to realize

- Costly: need to have control groups, often also baseline studies
- in media projects: randomization difficult to realize (self-selection)

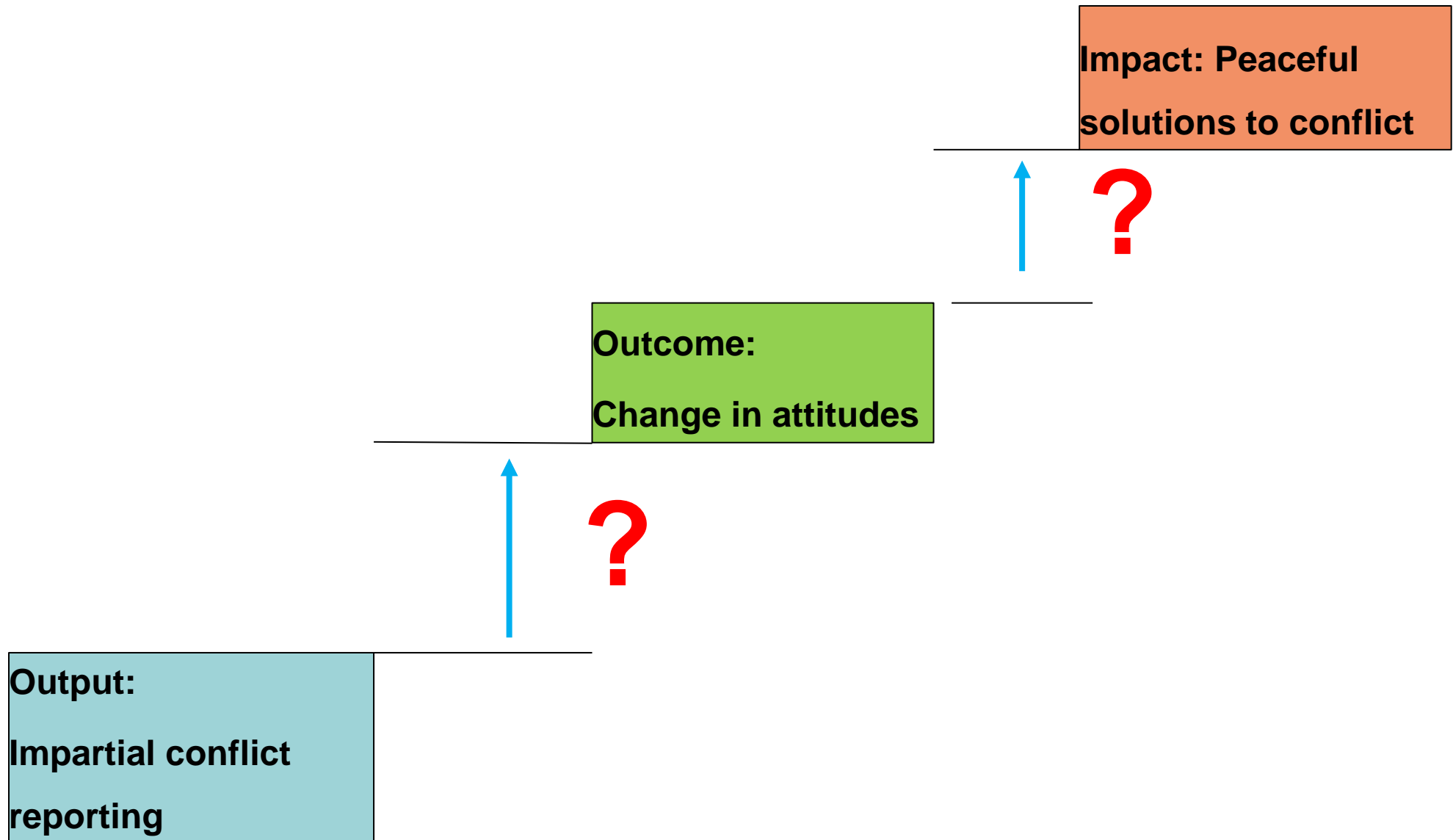
(b) Results of RCT might not be what programme managers need

- Media exposure to TV «XYZ» increases support for democracy by 10%
- **But why and how? Is not answered by RCT**

The starting point

- LogFrames are standard (which is good)
- Nevertheless, many media support projects are not sure about how exactly and why they work
 - Working with LogFrames tolerates the «black boxes» or «the big gaps»

The Usefulness of LogFrames and its missing parts



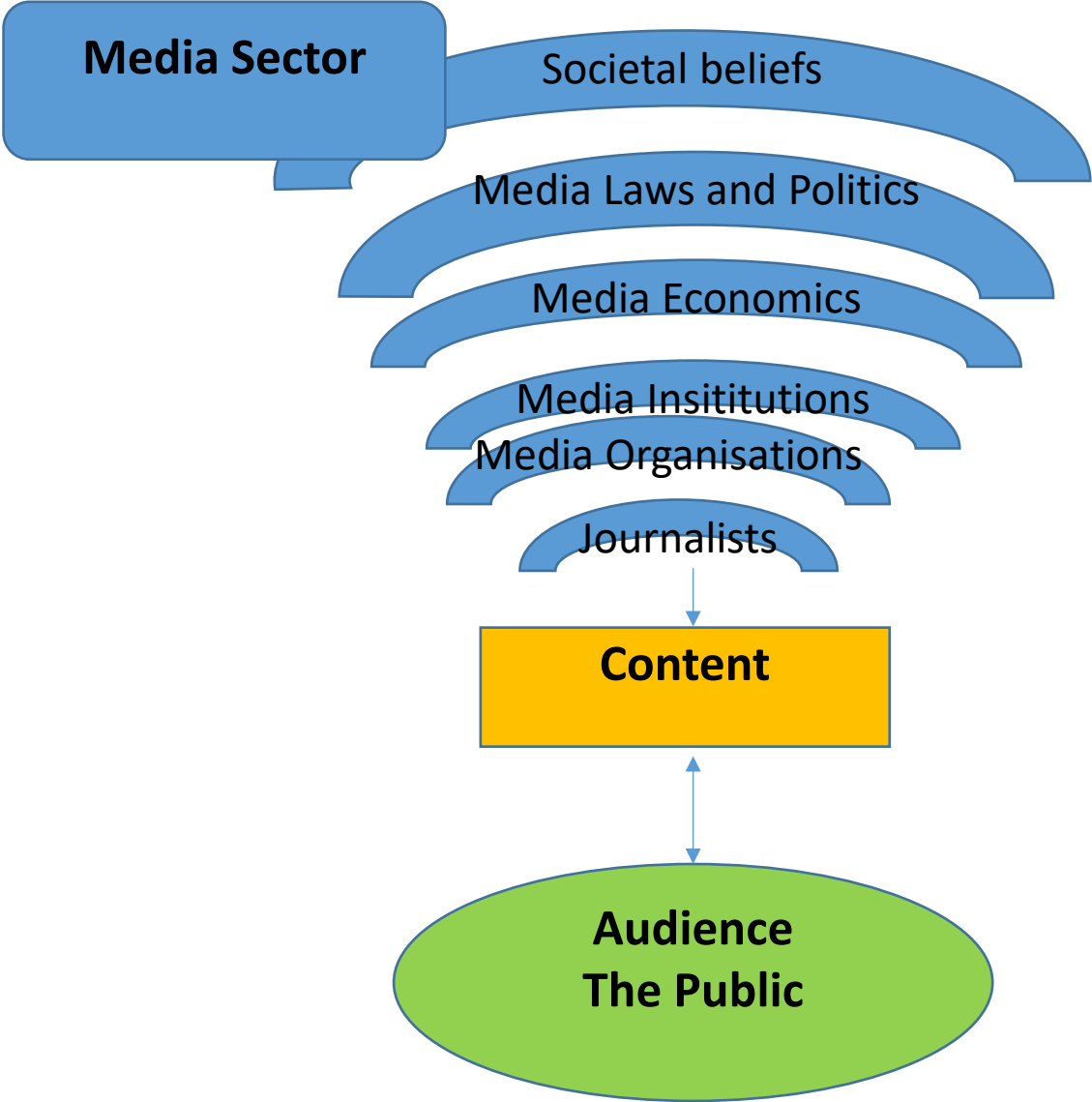
The advantages of result chains

- **Result chains and Theory of Change**
 - Result chains are detailed descriptions of the interlocking steps (conveyor belt; cog wheels)
 - Original model of Theory of Change (Weiss 1995): complex programmes need to ***uncover its hidden assumptions***
- **«Theory-based impact evaluation»**
 - Following the detailed results chain of projects, and assessing whether various steps were achieved (or not)

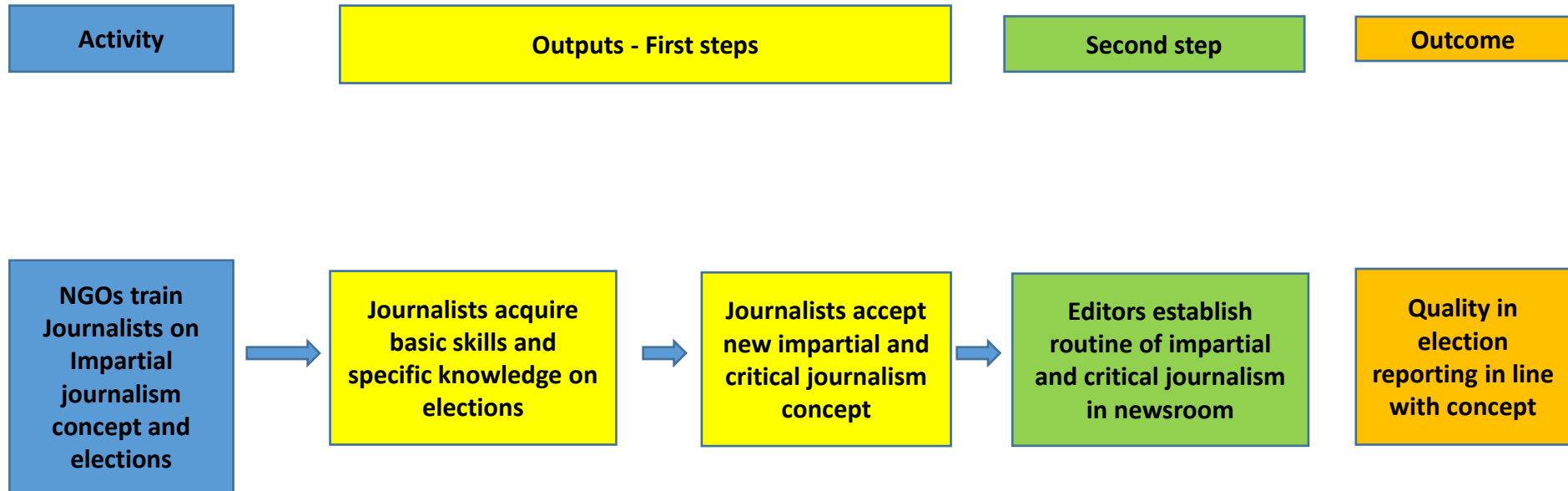
How does that work?

- Programme staff formulates various realistic result chain(s), they believe in («*Hypothesis*», «*Theory*»)
- Evaluators then conduct in-depth interviews with target groups (reporters; audiences) on
 - whether the various elements have materialized or not;
 - if not, where did the cogwheels break?
- Without control groups! Only with treatment group!
- **Main potential insights**
 - Whether it worked
 - How it worked
 - Where it stopped working; what does not work.

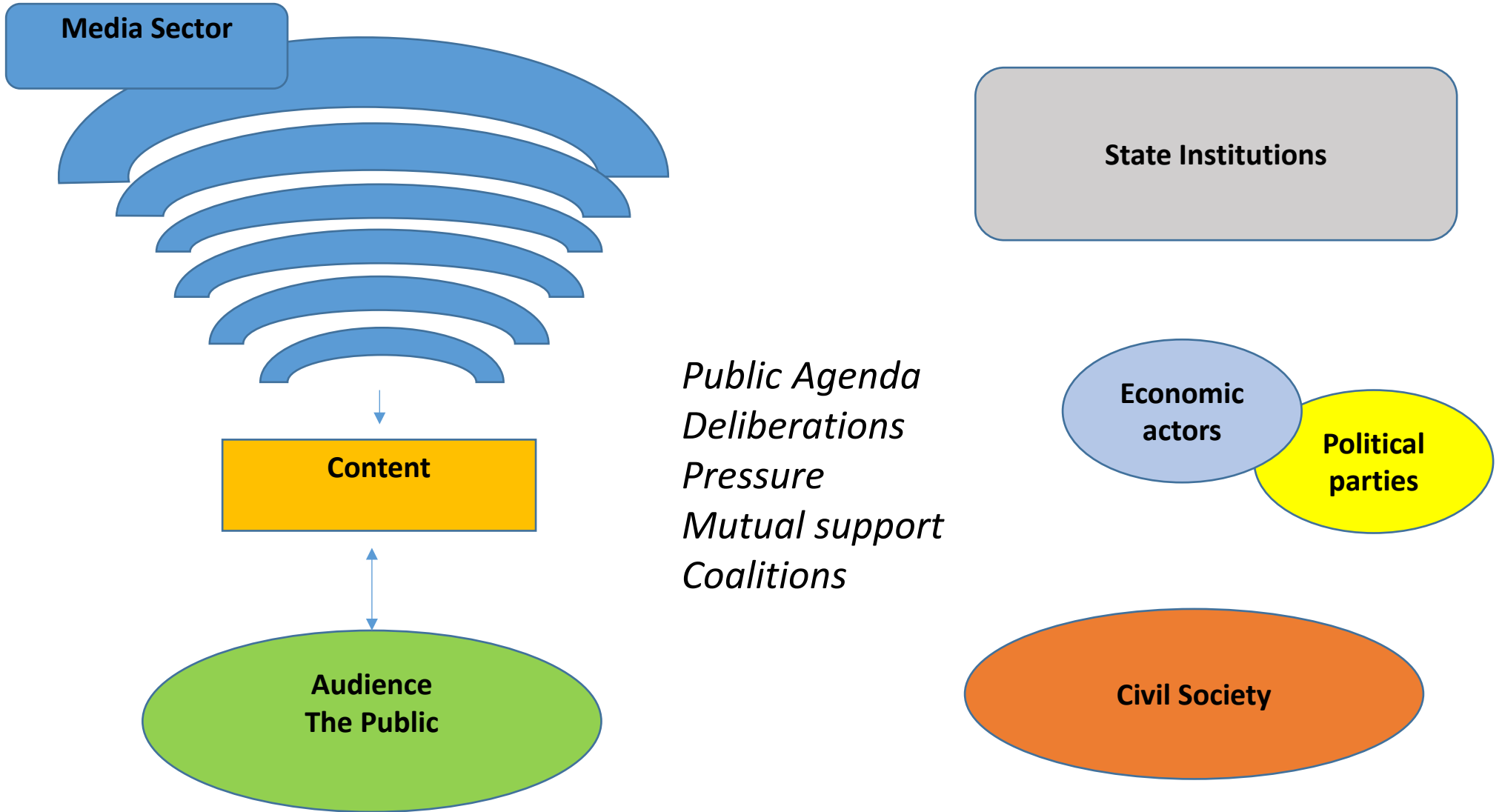
Media Sector Model



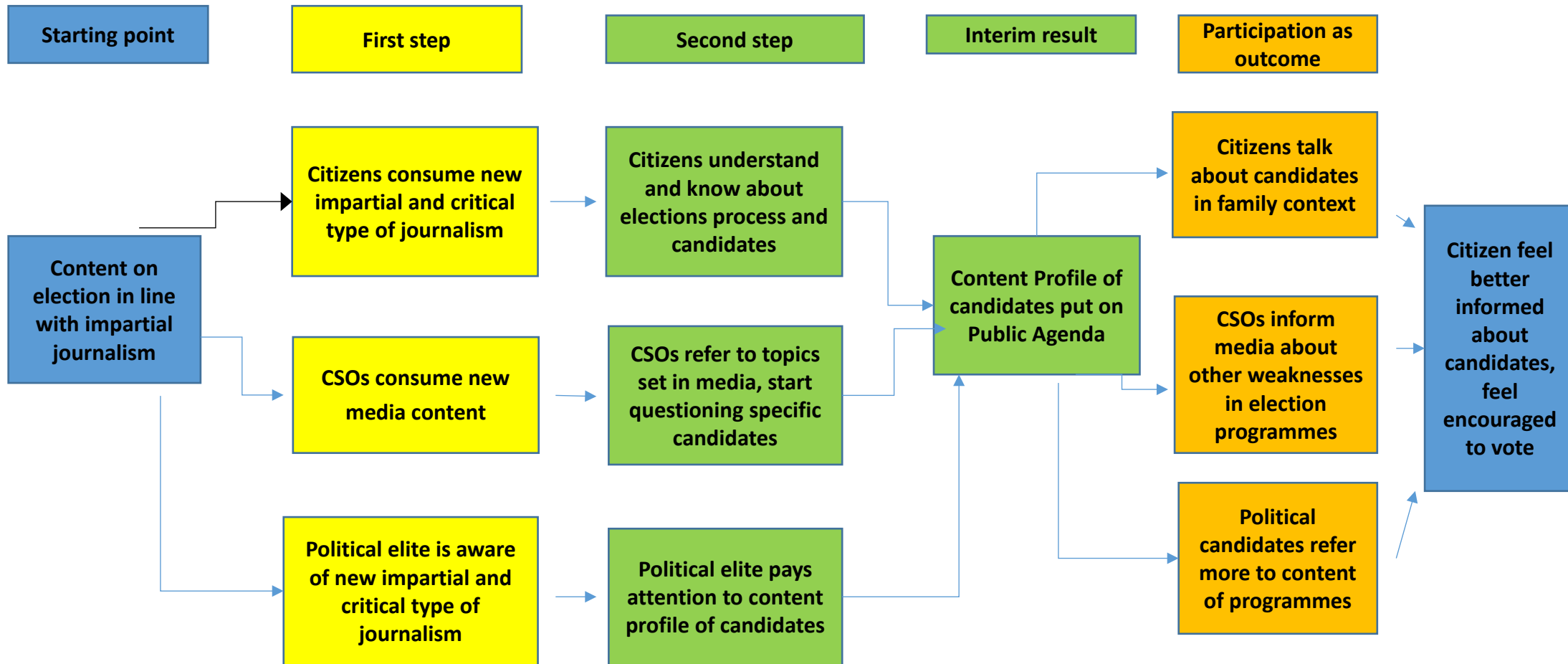
How training leads to better content in election reporting



The Public Sphere



From better «election» content to active participation by citizens



ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Assessment of theory-based evaluation

- **Advantages**
 - We will know what works and what does not in projects
- **Shortcomings**
 - Case study: We cannot make conclusions on other cases
 - We study only the participants (treatment group)
 - We don't know anything about the counterfactual
 - Attribution not possible
- **Ideal case**
 - First, doing theory-based evaluation
 - Second, conducting an evaluation with control groups, based on those successful interim steps discovered by the first approach

EXAMPLE STUDIO TAMANI MALI

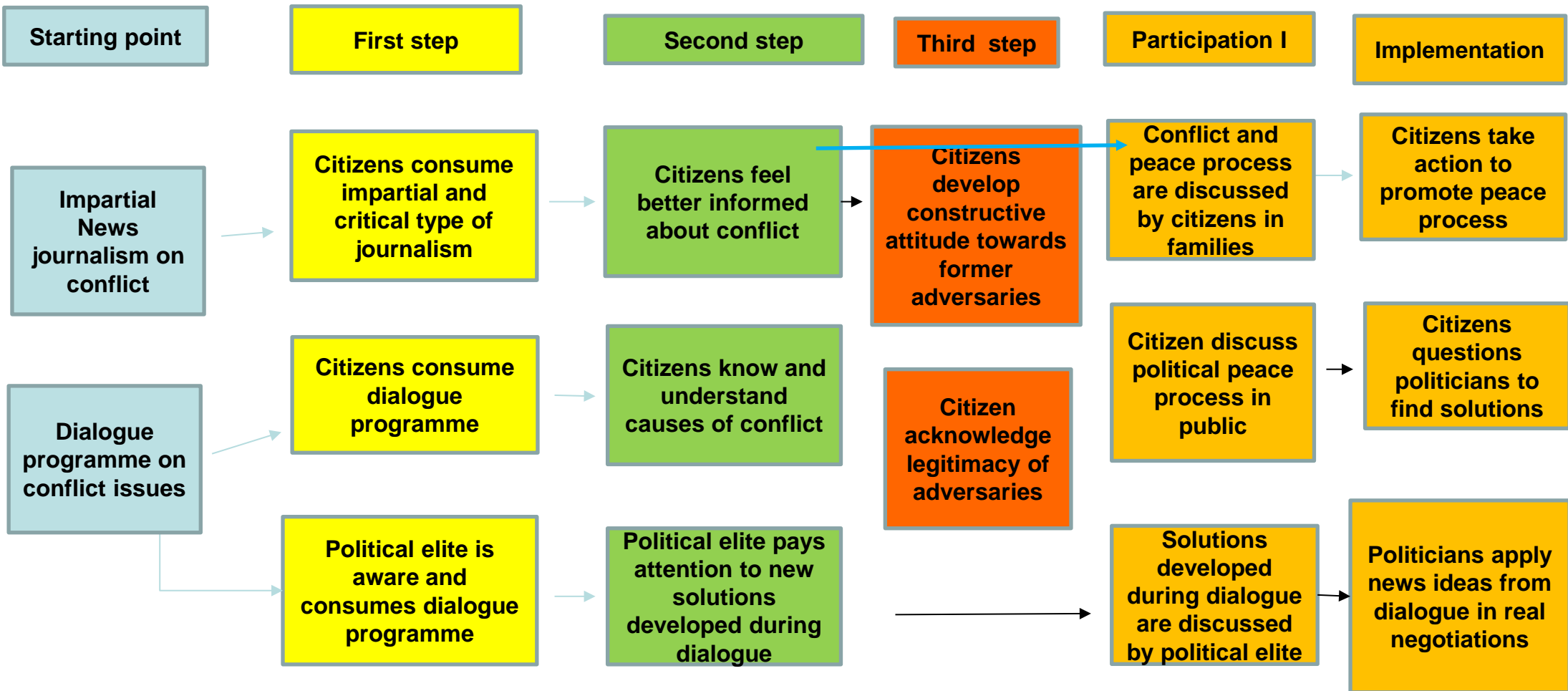
Studio Tamani in Mali

- **Studio Tamani** produces impartial news journalism and broadcasts it via 55 local radio stations in Mali (Fondation Hirondelle, 2016).
 - 15 minutes news per day, in 5 languages (French + 4 main local)
 - 45 Minutes «Le Grand Dialogue» , radio talk show with guests in the studio (in French)
- **Ambitious expectations regarding impact**
 - Enabling people and former adversaries to understand each other and find non-violent solutions to conflict issues.
 - Providing contributions to peace negotiations
 - Providing public support to peace process and get it implemented

Hypotheses regarding listeners of Tamani

- **Hypotheses on**
 - Increased and better **knowledge** on
 - Causes and
 - Solutions to conflict
 - Changed **assessments** of
 - Being informed about conflict
 - Positive attitudes towards conflict actors (constructive, legitimacy)
 - Positive towards peace process / preferred solutions
 - **Practice of audiences**
 - Discussion in groups
 - Participation in reality

Studio Tamani Result chains - hypotheses



RESULTS BY USING BOTH APPROACHES

Main findings through multiple approach

- **1st Effect**

Listeners of Studio Tamani news feel better informed on issues surrounding the conflict (based on their own evaluation, corroborated by content analysis).

2nd Effect

Listeners of Studio Tamani have developed greater political interest

3rd Effect:

Listeners of Studio Tamani news discuss conflict more often – but only within the family.

4th Effect:

Listeners of Studio Tamani see dialogue as realistic option and even favorite it as a solution for the peace process: ***Govt should discuss with former adversary groups***

Main findings

- **Some hypotheses could not be verified:**
 - Dialogue programme did not influence actual peace negotiations going on in Algiers (interviews with experts and participants)
 - Differences in **knowledge on causes and solutions** are due to area (Bamako, Tombouctou or Kayes) and education level, but **not due to listening to Studio Tamani**
 - Differences in **assessments** of attitudes towards conflict actors are mostly due to area or age, education, and wealth level, but again not due to listening to Studio Tamani.
 - **Participation is limited to discussion in families**, Studio Tamani listeners do not go further than others in terms of participation in public life (manifestations, approaching MPs).

Summary of the main findings

ST hypotheses («Theories of change») are **very ambitious** from a media effects perspective. Only some could be verified by this study.

→ **Important steps in peace process**

- ST provides comprehensive reporting on conflict
- Listeners feel better informed.
- Listeners talk more about conflict

→ **Realistic** from media effects perspective



SPARE SLIDES

Additional steps in achieving impact

- **Agenda setting (public and political)**
- **Kooperation citizens / media / civil society**

History of Media Effects Theory

	Stimulus-Response	Limited Effects	Specific Effects
When	Up to 1930	Up to 1960	Since 1970 to now
Kind of effect	Strong, predictable, influencing	weak, random, reinforcing	Medium to strong, differentiating, long-term
Effect process	Manipulation	Negative Selection	Positive selection, active construction

Specific effects theory

- Individuals use media according to their needs and preferences
- Both media AND recipient are active, influence each other
- Long-term processes are more relevant than short-term