

Abstract

This book examines the role of new media actors in the West African Republic of Bénin, commonly referred to as *grogneurs* or *faiseurs d'opinion*. These are frequent callers to interactive radio shows that openly discuss politics and society in contemporary Bénin. I argue that it is too simplistic to define them as 'citizen journalists.' Instead, we need to adopt a more complex analysis of their position within new configurations of the public sphere(s) shaped by a wide range of actors, interests, practices, and technologies. The book focuses mainly on a series of radio call-in shows, commonly called *grogne* in Bénin, where listeners can speak freely and directly about current issues or denounce grievances, using the radio as the subcontinent's still most predominant mass medium. It is evident that these programmes have become the primary platform through which these *grogneurs* express themselves. Their success is being significantly boosted by the increasing ease of access to mobile phones, and their enduring reputation for veracity and reliability. My book is a perfect case in point to demonstrate the pivotal role of central media actors, such as the *grogneurs*, which can be seen as information brokers. As media activists, they capitalise on the enabling potential of new media technologies and social media, which unfold their full potential in the Republic of Bénin when closely intertwined with more 'traditional' media such as radio and press. From a performative approach, the analysis of *grogne* shows and *grogneurs'* interventions should be conceptualised as a media ritual and a drama, which follows specific scripts and includes typical rhetoric, interaction rituals, verbal and indirect means of communication.

Figure 2: Sébastien Gnonhossou, tailor, Cotonou, July 2022.



Source: Author