NGO Representations Versus Mediation: A Learner Centred Approach to Public Understanding about Global Development

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Abstract: This article considers how the modes of communication non-governmental organisations (NGOs) use in rallying support for their campaigns shape the identity of their campaigners as potential catalysts for promoting public understanding about development issues. It argues that the revolution in communication technology provides NGOs with the opportunity to mediate the participation of their campaigners in framing knowledge about development issues. The article elaborates on an aspect of the findings from a doctoral thesis on the way youth-led campaign organisations mediate the involvement of their campaigners to promote public deliberation. It highlights how NGOs and global education providers can use social justice frames to mediate public engagement with development issues by steering their audiences towards open and safe sources of information. This will provide greater opportunity for public deliberation necessary for increasing public understanding about global development issues. It concludes by proposing how greater clarity on use of social justice frames can contribute to influencing attitudes towards global development and interdependence.

Key words: Public understanding; Public deliberation; Knowledge multipliers; Global interdependence; Virtual publics; Issue public; Campaigners.

Introduction

A decade after the publication of the *Finding Frames* (Darnton and Kirk, 2011) report on ways development NGOs can promote a higher level of United Kingdom (UK) public engagement with global development challenges, far-right nationalist sentiments have gained traction across leading western donor countries such as France and Germany. The emergence of a president in the United States (US) elected in 2016 on the rhetoric of 'America first' also

signalled a threat to ideals of an interdependent global society. This signifier of far-right sentiment raises important questions about the impact of nearly two decades of global education in Europe, and the tension between sometimes conflicting approaches to learning to challenge global injustice, and learning to acquire the skills to live in a global society. While the fields of development and global education continue to improve on approaches to learning about an unequal and interdependent world, INGO representations remain a major influence that shape Northern public perceptions about global development issues. It is important to clarify the use of the abbreviations INGO and NGO in this article. 'INGO' refers to international non-governmental organisations, which are one of the two sample categories in my doctoral research, whereas, 'NGO' is used to describe the second sample category, which are youth-led organisations.

This article derives from the findings of a doctoral thesis that examined how NGOs produce the knowledge they use in their campaigning and public education aimed at promoting public understanding and action on global inequality. It specifically develops on an aspect of the research findings around the practices of two categories of NGOs, in terms of how they identify and frame the campaign issues they communicate and disseminate to their audiences as knowledge. The article builds on a central proposition in the thesis that suggests a correlation between the communication strategies NGOs adopt and how it shapes the identity of their campaigners and as multipliers of public understanding. Evidence from the research findings showed that INGOs mobilised their campaign audience to take online actions in the form of petitions based on representations of development issues identified within the organisation. These prescribed actions aimed at influencing policy-makers therefore the representations were presented in soundbites associated with detached engagement and shallow public understanding.

Three related aspects of the research findings discussed in this article include: how INGOs focus on influencing policy-makers constrains their desire to promote public deliberation (and understanding) about global development issues; the implications of condensing complex global inequality issues; and the use of uncritical social justice frames in NGO representations

and global education. This article elaborates on how these dynamics can constitute barriers to public understanding about global issues, and the possibilities digital communication offer NGOs to adopt practices that can promote public deliberation. The article argues that the ability for NGO campaigners to activate narratives 'using similar frames' (Lang, 2013: 56-57) have implications for how they become potential multipliers of public understanding about development issues. It elaborates on a proposition made in the parent research on the need for NGOs and practitioners to adopt a mediatory role in supporting campaigners and autonomous leaners' access to diverse arenas of knowledge about global development. Specifically, this article makes an empirical contribution to debates in global education around ideas of social justice and the tension between problem-based learning aimed at influencing change, and learning aimed at acquiring skills and attitudes to live in a global society.

The diffusion in communication power has made possible mass transmission of information and the inclusion of voices from the most remote parts of the world to centres of global economic power. This, and the phenomenon of virtual movements enabled by digital networks organised around social media are examples of democratised forms of hashtag mobilisation against perceived injustice. The new possibilities virtual publics offer for knowledge exchange and the triangulation of information question the narrow view of campaigning as support for prescribed actions (Chapman and Fisher, 2000). NGO 'campaigners' refers to the virtual and membership network of audiences that are mobilised to act on particular development issues identified within the organisation. Beyond a diffused means of achieving critical mass for collective action, campaigning provides an arena for the flow of information across social actors in diverse locations, and for generating similar frames (Gyoh, 2016). It also offers a strategic tool for achieving specific outcomes (Eade, 2002), and the possibility of activating virtual publics that enable the inclusion of the perception of marginalised voices (Leipold, 2002; Lang, 2013).

This article further elaborates on evidence from the parent research, which suggests a higher density of communication when NGOs take on a

mediatory role in directing campaigners to diverse sources of knowledge. Such encounters contribute to generating similar frames, and in shaping the identity of campaigners as potential multipliers of knowledge. The importance of common frames has become more apparent at a time when the global community is promoting desirable social behaviour across distant countries, a form of collective action to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

Context and theoretical assumptions

In examining the knowledge dimension of NGO campaigning, a basic outline of the theoretical assumptions adopted in the research is important for understanding social processes in generating and disseminating knowledge. This provides a conceptual guide to analysing how 'public understanding', can be achieved outside conventional approaches to learning, and how information becomes actionable knowledge. Public understanding about global poverty and inequality is used in the sense defined in the 2005 Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign to infer the level of knowledge the public has about *international debt*, *international trade* and *aid,* considered to be the three pillars of international action (Darnton and Kirk, 2011). In addition to these three elements, public understanding includes familiarity with ideals of global interconnectedness and social justice as espoused in the fields of development and global education. This article adopts the construct of campaigners as end users of knowledge, and stakeholders in framing and multiplying knowledge aimed at collective action. The rationale for adopting the MPH definition of 'public understanding' in this research is explained in a later section.

The primary research on which this article is based was set in the context of NGO campaigning on global inequality, and how campaigners as autonomous learners can become potential multipliers of knowledge about global interdependence. Understanding the ways knowledge is produced and framed in NGO campaigning is important for analysing how concepts that underpin public understanding are reflected in their narratives, and the role of campaigners as potential multipliers of public understanding. This approach to analysing public understanding requires identifying a constructivist theory of knowledge that emphasise the role of social actors, and the motivation for

collective action. Organisational knowledge theory, therefore, provided for the research a suitable framework for conceptualising the nature of interaction between NGOs and their campaigners. This theory proposes knowledge as contextual interpreted information organisations generate and construct in collaboration with actors that apply the knowledge in accomplishing a set objective (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Organisational theory relates with the emphasis made in this article on the value of a mediated approach to learning about global development challenges.

The link between organisational knowledge theory and problem-based knowledge that is socially produced was made using Castells' (1996; 2000) concept of the Network society which explains the arenas and sites of knowledge production, where diverse actors interact and collaborate in constructing knowledge. This concept describes the diffusion in arenas where knowledge is produced and disseminated as a public good (Castells, 2009: 54). The integration of these concepts provides a constructivist framework for analysing how the social processes of knowledge production in the Network Society provide opportunities for the involvement of campaigners as knowledge actors. This conceptualisation of knowledge pays particular attention to the forms, sites and processes of knowledge construction.

By forms of knowledge, I refer to different cognitive modes, such as tacit knowledge, what we know from personal experience, and explicit knowledge, what we internalise from interaction and secondary sources. In combination these are used to interpret social reality and applied in understanding social events such as hunger, international debt and trade injustices. Wickramasinghe and Lubitz (2007) offer a generic description of the knowledge cycle in organisational knowledge theory to involve four broad interactive and progressive stages. The first stage is the knowledge *generation* - information emanating from institutions and organisations in its tacit and explicit forms. It includes information interpreted by the use of signs, codes and symbols that can be retrieved. Knowledge *creation* is the second stage of the knowledge cycle where group involvement is critical for negotiating meaning and defining context (Ibid.: 32). As seen below in Figure 1, the

distribution stage entails sharing of knowledge for the purpose of *application* to accomplish specific tasks.

Figure 1: The Knowledge Cycle

Generation → Creation → Distribution → Application

(Adapted from Wickramasinghe and Lubitz, 2007)

All four stages are iterative and entail social actors interacting with a common purpose to apply the knowledge in accomplishing a shared objective. Under this formulation, NGOs are conceptualised as organisations that engage campaigners as *issue publics* in generating, creating and disseminating knowledge aimed at accomplishing set objectives.

The knowledge cycle explains a process that can result in thick or shallow deliberations rather than an ideal outcome. In relation to the Frames theory, the knowledge cycle is useful in illustrating how NGOs can generate thick or shallow conversations, linked to 'deep' or 'surface frames' (Darton and Kirk, 2011: 65;75), depending on how the issue is presented. The public rallies and online interaction between campaigners also relate to the socialisation process that occurs at the knowledge *creation* phase. The multiplication and sharing of framed narratives for prescribed action relates to the *distribution* and *application* stages of the knowledge cycle. Furthermore, the prescribed action highlights the context of solving pertinent problems. NGO campaigners are, therefore, constructed as 'social actors that generate normative claims about common good' (Lang, 2013: 13), and consciously apply framed information to achieve specific outcomes. This hybrid theory explains 'a unique mode of knowledge that is problem based, framed, produced and disseminated in the context of application' (Gibbons et al., 1994:

3). The term 'issue publics' is used to refer to the role NGOs assume as proxies of the public sphere, and the role of their campaigners who are the immediate audience, and potential multipliers of knowledge (Lang, 2013).

Research samples and methodological implications

A brief description of the sampled categories of NGOs is important for setting the context of how the data was collected and analysed. The first sample category are international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) with elaborate bureaucratic structures, highly institutionalised and professionalised organisations that undertake humanitarian projects overseas. It comprised Oxfam, CAFOD and Trócaire that mobilise an amorphous network of campaigners in undertaking their advocacy, and are also leading producers of teaching materials in global education. They are referred to in the article as 'INGOs'. The second sample category comprised two student-led campaign NGOs, People and Planet, and Medsin, that are referred here as 'youth-led organisations'. They have a lean organisational structure, localised in the UK, operated by university students, and are much smaller in size and funding base. Their core activity centres around advocacy and campaigning against global inequality and social injustice.   Both NGO categories are non-profit organisations with a moral purpose that engaged in a range of socially oriented activities (Gyoh, 2016: 29). All five samples, Oxfam, CAFOD, Trócaire, and two youth-led organisations, People and Planet, and Medsin were identified following a pilot study in Ireland and the UK.

The collective case study research design was adopted as it was suited to use of replication logic in triangulating the findings across the two bounded categories of NGOs. Purposive sampling was used in identifying quickly the likely source of relevant data (Creswell, 1994; Nachmias, 1996). This entailed identifying samples that represented the typical instance of NGOs that had identical modes of communication with their campaign audience. The data collection tools included interviews, visual methods, a technique that focuses on what we see and how we see it (Prosser, 2013), the study of images as objects (Spencer, 2011). This technique was used in making sense of the nature of conversation and interaction between campaigners on social media.

Other techniques included document review and questionnaires administered on youth-led organisations whose membership were also campaigners.

The participants in both bounded cases were nominated by the orgaisations and comprised of staff and students that worked in the campaign, communications and public education unit of the organisations. In all cases, open ended face-to-face interviews were administered with the same set of questions applied to each category of NGO. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Pseudonyms were used by request to protect the anonymity of participants. Given that the investigation aimed at identifying patterns and trends in the practices of the sampled NGOs, the data analysis focused on the common traits in each bounded case, rather than a comparative of the two categories. This was important for generating tentative assertions from triangulation of the different sources of data (Stake, 2006: 39). Although the structure, size and mission of the two sampled categories of NGOs included in the research differed, the use of the Internet as a virtual arena for framing and disseminating their messages provide opportunities for building a network of public audiences.

Public understanding: NGO representations versus mediation

Although official funding institutions in the UK and Ireland tend to favour educational approaches to promoting public understanding about global interdependence, NGO campaigning is often the reference point in surveys undertaken to assess levels of public understanding. Research on the impact of educational approaches to promoting public understanding in the broad fields of development and global education is arguably thin. There is also a growing recognition within global education literature that campaigning can introduce new narratives and take on issues of structural injustice where NGOs build strong alliances with their network of public audiences such as trade unions (Krause, 2016: 153 cited in Hartmeyer 2016; Cox, 2011; Jones, 2010; Leipold, 2002). The implication of these debates for public understanding about global development issues are also well articulated in the *Finding Frames* report (Danton and Kirk, 2011).

The concept of public understanding is used to mean public knowledge about international debt, international trade and global aid, described in MHP as the three pillars of international action (Darnton and Kirk, 2011: 19). In this article it is used in a broader sense to include knowledge about 'the structural causes of hunger' (Tibbett and Stalker, 2013: 18-23), and attitudes that promote values of global interdependence. The MPH definition of public understanding was adopted for its novelty in articulating the structural and institutional factors that underpin debates about global poverty and inequality. It also offers a conceptual boundary in navigating the problem of subjectivity and contested meanings. The inclusion of global interdependence broadens the scope of the concept of public understanding to reflect the global context of this article.

The proposition of knowledge as the kernel of public understanding relates to the constructivist approach to knowledge that posits the involvement of social actors, who are also autonomous knowers. 'Autonomous knower' refers to self-directed learning, 'where individuals come with prior perceptions and what it is they want to learn' (Oxford and Yu Lin, 2011: 157-158). This assumption is central to the proposition in this article that, as leading actors in producing development knowledge, a shift from 'representations' of development issues to mediating the process of knowing can be rewarding to the desire NGOs have in promoting public understanding about global interdependence. The emergence of virtual publics as a practice arena for public deliberation and information dissemination has also extended the public space with possibility of coalitions and blurring of physical locations. This virtual community of practice gives further impetus to the importance of mediating the involvement of autonomous learning.

Public understanding versus public awareness about the campaign issue

The response from participants in sampled INGOs revealed the different senses in which the term 'campaigning' was used to include raising *public awareness* about development issues and *public appeals* for donations towards humanitarian causes. However, the 'If' campaign evaluation report made an

important distinction between 'heightened public awareness' about the conflict issue, and 'increasing public understanding' about the issue (Tibbett and Stalker, 2013: 18). The latter differs in the sense that it refers to increased knowledge about the nature of the problem beyond an awareness about the issue. While INGOs recognised the difference between campaigning that aims at increased public understanding, and awareness of public appeals to solicit donations, this was not reflected in the frames they use in communicating their campaign messages.

The practice of combined messaging INGOs adopt in their campaigning lends itself to basic awareness about the campaign initiative, and marginal value in promoting public deliberation. Although respondents from Oxfam, CAFOD and Trócaire described their campaigning as based on knowledge, understanding, values and skills, they did not consider the role of campaigners to include advocacy. The INGOs made a distinction between campaigning and advocacy, which they conceived of as an activity that is undertaken by more knowledgeable and skilled professionals within the organisation. In the attempt to influence decision-making and gain some degree of insider status, 'most INGOs tend to prefer advocacy that target institutions rather than the wider public' (Lang, 2013: 22). The focus on influencing policy-makers meant that they did not seek to generate deep frames, and therefore constituted a trade-off for public understanding. Pettigrew (1990) suggested that where more emphasis is placed on sharing expert knowledge and lobbying policy makers, there is a trade-off with communication that provokes public deliberation. It is worth noting that both INGOs and the youth-led organisations considered their campaigners to include staff within the organisations engaged in identifying, designing and communicating the campaign issues, as well as the audiences that receive and act on the message. This was reflected in the response from a respondent from Oxfam's campaign and communications unit:

> "We previously saw for our campaign an amorphous public that is out there to be engaged…there isn't an amorphous public out there. There are groups of people that want to engage with particular issues, so that we have a more strategic approach to our audiences".

This suggests NGOs considered their public audience as potential campaigners. However, there is a notable difference in how the youth-led organisations presented the issue to their campaign audience. As noted earlier, the processes of identifying and framing the campaign issues in Oxfam, CAFOD and Trócaire occurred within the organisation, and were undertaken by officials considered knowlegeable and competent advocates. This meant there was little opportunity for campaigners to be involved in the important processes of identifying and generating similar frames about the campaign issue. The implication of this top-down approach is described in what Freire (1970: 54) proposed as the 'banking model of education', in which the 'teacher (in this case NGO) identified the knowledge content, and the learners, assimilate it as containers' and passive consumers of knowledge.

The exclusion of campaigners in the critical processes of constructing knowledge in INGOs constrained three important factors Lang (2013: 56-57) described as important for activating similar frames namely: 'the density of conversation between NGO campaigners, the target of NGO commuication, and the mode of comunication with campaign audiences'. The target of NGO communication defines how the other two factors can influence levels of public deliberation. The desire of INGOs to influence policy-makers meant that it used soundbites in representing complex development issues. Its communication was, therefore, limited to creating an awareness about an issue, and to mobilise prescribed actions targeted at policy-makers.

Aside from excluding the knower from the processes of negotiating meaning, INGO representations promote passive actions when presented around broad themes that decontextualise and condense complex issues in soundbites. For example, the framing of campaign issues using broad themes such as CAFOD's 'Hunger for change' and Oxfam's 'Grow campaign' had a number of complex campaign issues condensed into simple narratives encouraged detached online actions rather than promote public deliberation. This contrasted with the youth-led organisations that considered their campaigning as advocacy, and the role of the organisation as mediating the encounter of campaigners with diverse sources of knowledge. The mission statement on the website of Medsin, one of the sample organisations, revealed

that youth-led organisations considered their role: "To create a network of people in order to influence the thoughts and actions of those around you, or those that can make the change you desire" (Medsin, 2020). This was also reflected in the response from People and Planet:

> "…I think we point young people to the direction of the information and knowledge, and they decide what and how they are going to campaign. People choose different levels of engagement through the briefing we provide, and they decide what they want to do" (Gyoh, 2016: 146).

The role of the organisation was mediating the involvement of campaigners in constructing their knowledge by exposing them to different sources of knowledge. The youth-led organisations described their approach as a democratic process where students who are also campaigners and advocates decide the campaign issue during annual conferences. This provided them the opportunity to negotiate and develop shared values and common frames they use in their interaction and conversations in social media.

The youth-led campaigners also considered their digital network as a virtual public space where members generated new narratives in framing knowledge about the campaign issue through counter-discourse. Fraser (1992: 123) described counter-discourse as 'the expressions of marginalised voices and counter narratives' that interrogate mainstream knowledge producers. The diffusion of digital information and communication power also enabled them to encounter diverse sources of knowledge, and include the perspective of marginalised groups in mainstream discourses. These networks also provided an alternative arena Thompson (1995) described as 'counter-public', where social actors converge to articulate and express their perspectives whilst navigating the gatekeeping tendency of dominant knowledge institutions. While the clustering of complex issues around broad themes offered INGOs a cost-effective way to build support for their advocacy, it presented a potential barrier to public deliberation.

Mitigating barriers to public understanding

While Frames theory is central to the ideas explored in the article, the primary focus here is how *deep frames* can be multiplied in fostering public understanding beyond their use or generation in presenting development issues. This addresses the problem of moving the profound ideas propagated over a decade ago from theory to praxis. The 'density of conversation' between NGO audiences, Lang (2013: 56) suggested, was important for multiplying similar frames in the nature and level of public deliberation. Although the hybridisation of frames in INGO messaging has been described by a number of authors as serving the wider agendas of INGO humanitarian endeavours (see for example, Baillie Smith, 2013; Dogra, 2012; Cox, 2011; Cohen, 2001), the implications for public deliberation has received less attention. The use of hybrid frames of compassion and social justice in INGO representation and fundraising appeals is argued as promoting ambivalent citizenship (Yanacopulos and Baillie Smith, 2008), and is, therefore, a potential barrier to public deliberation (Dogra, 2012:28). This barrier can be analysed in two forms; the first is the use of campaign themes that cluster and simplify complex structural issues presented in soundbites with little opportunity to generate common frames. The second is the use of contradictory narratives that combine social justice and compassionate frames. This was observed as common in the faith-based NGO application of Christian and Catholic social teaching.

The combination of social justice ideals such as equality, rights, access and participation with natural disaster narratives is a form of NGO representation that detracts from the root problem, and therefore, undermine public understanding. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic for example, such ambigous narratives can constitute barriers to public understanding about global interconnetedness and the dimension of unequal access of the majority world to vaccines. Bryan and Bracken (2011 cited in Tallon, 2013) also described the use of such hybrid frames as a structural conflict between INGO primary charity agendas and their identity as advocates for social transformation. This further raises questions about ambivalent social justice frames that are present in INGO representations. Ollis (2008: 45) suggested

that 'generating a common frame of reference' centred on social justice is important for evoking the passion to seek change, rather than the compassion to give. For example, in contrast with the images of starvation and difficulty INGOs used in representation of global inequality, youth-led organisations used protest images to generate social justice frames. The broken Nike logo below is a typical example of the type of images People and Planet used in promoting critical engagement with activities of corporate power on the exploitation of workers in poorer countries by multinationals. Such protest images can be more powerful for generating deep frames than images of compassion Darnton and Kirk (2011:75) associated with surface frames.

Figure 2: People and Planet use of social justice images (Gyoh, 2016: 157. Credit, www.peopleandplanet.org)

An interesting point that emerged from the research was the distinction youth-led organisations made between 'campaign themes' and 'the campaign initiative' in how the message is presented to activate public deliberation. Although the *Finding Frames* report described the focus on 'single issue' narratives as a major weakness in NGO campaigning (see Darnton and Kirk, 2011), the youth-led organisations considered 'single issue' narratives important for clarity and density of conversation about the issue. It mitigates the problem of ambivalent and contradictory frames found in INGO campaign messaging. For example, although highlighting the exploitation of workers by

multinational corperations in the clothing industry in a particular developing country is a 'single issue', it also exposes the wider structural dimension of business practices in the global South. As Lang (2013) noted, the focus on a single issue lends itself to 'thicker' voices and allows for density of conversations more than issues that are communicated in broad themes. The practices of youth-led organisations emphasised not only the importance of clarity about the issues but also involving campaigners and learners in the processes of identifying, designing and communicating the message as described in the knowledge cycle. It also indicated that the focus on single issues activated deliberation among campaigners, thereby, creating conditions for deeper engagement, and in shaping the identity of campaigners as potential multipliers of public understanding.

Although the three INGOs recognise the difference between campaigning that aims to raise public awareness about global poverty, and appeals to solicit public donations, this did not reflect in the way they framed or communicated their massages. The clustering of contradictory campaign messages with 'feel good sexy rallies' (Cameron and Haanstra, 2008) resulted in a heightened awareness about the campaign event, but offered low reward in provoking public deliberation. Arguably, it is the presence of such top-down frames and narratives in formal education that falls to accusations of indoctrination in the fields of global education (Standish, 2012; Elliot, Fourali and Issler, 2010).

The absence of dialogic deliberation in the communication between INGO campaigners was observed in the detached interaction and low density of conversation on their Facebook social media platforms. Although the interaction between campaigners in youth-led organisations and INGO categories appeared similar, the absence of a common frame in the narratives of INGO campaigners meant the low density of conversations resulted in shallow engagement (Gyoh, 2016: 186). Document analysis of campaign materials used by faith-based INGOs such as CAFOD showed that the representations of global poverty framed on Christian social teaching emphasised the virtues of compassion and charity rather than the questioning of assumptions around access, participation and inequalities. For example,

CAFOD and Trócaire interpreted 'giving' as a form of taking action against social injustice. This interpretation of social justice relates to the ambivalent and compassionate actions associated with surface frames (Darnton and Kirk, 2011: 75). This uncritical conceptualisation of social justice raises fundamental questions not only about how social justice is interpreted in NGO representations, but also in approaches to global education that propagate learning to acquire 'skills to live in a global society', rather than attitudes that challenge unjust structures of interdependence (Bourn, 2015: 19-20).

In sum, while the youth-led organisations applied social justice as a frame for highlighting and interrogating issues around inequality, rights, access and unjust structure of an interdependent world, the concept remains ambiguous in NGO representations, and uncritically applied in global education. The choice NGOs make between engaging their campaigners through representations of global development issues, and mediating their encounter as autonomous learners has implications in shaping their identity as multipliers of public deliberation or passive actors. The practices of the two categories of NGOs provide evidence in arguing how these contrasting identities are linked to surface or deep frames, with implications for public undertanding.

Group identity and activating common frames

Considering that INGO campaigners were excluded from the processes of identifying and framing the campaign issue, there was little opportunity to become potential catalysts in multiplying public understanding about global inequality. The absence of group identity in INGO relationships with their campaign audience was noted as a setback in generating similar frames. The importance of group identity for collective action is acknowledged in the literature on social movements (Touraine, 2004) and reflected in evidence from the membership structure of youth-led organisation (Gyoh, 2016). INGOs that do not have individual membership structure can explore possibilities that their network of campaign audiences offer and their position as first in line of receiving and dissemination knowledge. This is further strengthened by the emergence and dominance of online campaigning, and the

use of web-based forms of public communication (Harrison, 2006; Marshall, 2010). Although Oxfam, CAFOD and Trócaire do not operate a membership structure with identifiable campaigners, possibilities existed for them to engage more strategically with their local support and outreach groups in promoting a shared purpose. The support and mentorship Oxfam and CAFOD provide local groups offer a ready organic structure that can be explored in enhancing the involvement of their campaigner audiences as a cohesive virtual network of issue publics.

The concept of informationalism and communication power also explains the possibilities digital information technology affords campaigners as autonomous knowers that can activate counter-publics through their networks. It is worth mentioning that although digital information arenas are considered as virtual publics, participation in the information sharing activity in virtual networks does not necessarily produce catalysts that multiply public understanding. Indeed, these digital networks can also serve as venues for the proliferation of passive actors. The growing problem of 'fake News' associated with the diffusion in communication power is an example of the subversive use of digital knowledge arenas as spaces for misinformation and discursive barriers to public understanding. However, the value of diffused communication power and trans-national networks of virtual publics in an interdependent global society cannot be overstated.

Conclusion

The communication strategies NGOs adopt for engaging with their campaign audiences have implications for promoting public deliberation necessary in generating similar frames around a common purpose. This also has implications for global education considering the role INGOs play as leading producers of knowledge about global development. Where INGO campaigning focuses on influencing policy decision makers, there is a trade-off between generating public deliberation and shallow engagement. The negative consequences for public understanding are explained in the concepts of 'deep' and 'surface' frames. The conditions for generating common frames necessary for public understanding and collective action is enhanced where

NGO communications target the public audience. Evidence from the practices of youth-led organisations contradict the association of single-issue narratives in NGO campaigning with surface frames. Rather, it showed how single issues provide more clarity and density of conversation when used with social justice frames in questioning unjust structures of global interdependence.

Organisational knowledge theory provided a constructivist paradigm for analysing how the interaction between social actors in NGOs can foster or limit opportunities to participate in constructing knowledge about global development. It also offered a way of conceptualising the role of networks driven by digital information and communication in providing a virtual arena/public, and how deep frames can be activated and multiplied. The presence of group identity was argued as important for mobilising collective action. While the membership structure of youth-led organisations was an advantage in generating similar frames, INGOs could make up for the absence of such a structure by engaging more strategically with the affiliate groups and virtual networks they maintain with their campaign audience. A strategic shift from 'representation' to 'mediation' could be rewarding to INGOs and the desire in global education to promote public understanding about global development issues, as well as reflecting on the purpose and interpretations of social justice as a means to that end.

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