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Summary and Keywords

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are not-for-profit groups, which are independent of commercial businesses and government agencies. They claim to serve various notions of the public good, including advocacy and service delivery. So the definition of an "NGO" is broad, including many different kinds of organizations, such as aid agencies, human rights, indigenous, feminist and environmental lobby groups.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, the predecessors of NGOs—pressure groups —tried to advance their cause by cultivating close relations with the mainstream press, and/or publishing their own periodicals. But from the late 20th century onward, many NGOs started routinely producing their own news content, including written text but also photojournalism, video, and sophisticated interactive projects. Some of this material is disseminated through "alternative" outlets, social media and activist hubs. But it is difficult for NGOs to gain a mass audience in these ways, so most major NGOs recruit or commission experienced journalists to carry out this work for them.

Much of the research in this area has focused on either journalists' increased dependence on NGOs, or on the restructuring of NGOs' resources, priorities and working cultures in accordance with news norms. Most scholars have also focused on the work of international aid agencies and/or human rights organizations, as well as particular kinds of crises, such as famines, hurricanes and conflicts. The extant literature is heavily weighted toward organizations which are based in North America or Europe. However, a small but growing number of scholars are challenging this, exploring the news work of other NGOs and/or news outlets, in other countries, and during other kinds of news-making periods, including conferences, summits and "quiet" news weeks.

These more diverse approaches to studying NGOs as news organizations have led to the theorization of NGO journalism becoming more nuanced. Researchers have shifted away from polarized, and somewhat over-generalized, assessments of the effects of NGO news-making, toward a greater awareness of complexity and heterogeneity. This has involved them using theory about organizations, institutions, fields and moral economies.

However, the kinds of power which NGO workers are able to acquire by becoming news reporters is still under-theorized, and scholars still tend to avoid examining the frameworks they use as a basis for normative evaluation. Finally, changing media practices (including social media practices) and NGOs' adoption of new communication technology (including satellite and drone imagery) means that this area of news work is still evolving very rapidly.

Keywords: advocacy, aid, drones, environment, humanitarian, human rights, photojournalism, public relations, video, journalism studies

Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have long sought to shape news by providing background briefings, constructing newsworthy events or enabling journalists to access case studies. However, since 2000, an increasing number of NGOs have begun producing their own journalistic content, including written copy, photos, video and other kinds of innovative multimedia content, such as immersive and interactive media sites (Jones, 2017), as well as satellite and drone imagery (Denčik & Allan, 2017; Jones, 2017).

These varied forms of NGO journalism necessitate NGO workers engaging in many different kinds of journalistic production. For instance, NGOs may use their extensive on-the-ground networks to conduct detailed research, including interviewing and capturing visual "evidence" of particular events (Powers, 2016A, 2018; Reese, 2015). But NGOs may also collect, verify, curate and remediate content produced by others, including that which is circulated through social media (McPherson, 2015A; Norris, 2017; Reese, 2015).

NGOs disseminate the content they produce through their own websites and social media accounts (Imison, 2014), as well as through other kinds of media outlets. These include specialist interest magazines (Comfort & Blankenship, 2018), "alternative" periodicals (Mercado, 2015), activist media hubs (Denčik & Wilkin, 2015; Russell, 2013), and even rap news TV channels (Shaker & Falzone, 2015). But it is difficult for NGOs to gain mass audiences through such means, so placing material in mainstream news outlets continues to be the main focus of most major NGOs' news-making activity (Powers, 2018; Wright, 2018).

There is some evidence to suggest that NGOs are beginning to get more access to mainstream news outlets, but it is hard to say exactly how much NGO content news outlets use because it is often unattributed (Wright, 2018). What we can say is that NGOs still face considerable challenges in placing their material in news outlets (Powers, 2016B, 2018). Many have responded to these challenges by carefully tailoring their media content so that it fits the requirements of target news outlets (Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Fenton, 2010). But this kind of activity requires significant amounts of time, as well as financial and cultural capital (Lang, 2013; Powers, 2016B). Thus placing material in mainstream news outlets is an activity which tends to be dominated by large, wealthy

international NGOs (INGOs) that have the resources to recruit experienced journalists and continually update their media technology (Fenton, 2010).

For these reasons, much of the research in NGO journalism has focused on the ways in which major international NGOs are becoming more like news organizations. Scholars have highlighted NGOs' recruitment of large numbers of former journalists to fill communications roles, which are sometimes even advertised as journalistic posts. These changes in staffing are thought to have triggered profound shifts in the organizational cultures, values and working practices of such NGOs (Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Fenton, 2010; Moon, 2018).

Indeed, some see NGOs as increasingly measuring success in terms of mainstream news norms, thus risking losing their alternative cultures and values (e.g., Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Fenton, 2010). At the same time, others have raised concerns about the extent to which news organizations have become dependent on the material, and interpretative perspectives, of NGOs: arguing that this undermines the critical independence of journalism (e.g., Franks, 2013; Seaton, 2010). However, research in this area has tended to focus quite narrowly on international aid agencies, and to a lesser extent, human rights organizations. Such NGOs are certainly very active in media-making, particularly during conflicts, famines, floods, earthquakes, and other disasters which attract a lot of academic attention (Powers, 2018; Wright, 2018). But there is a need for scholars to attend to other kinds of journalistic activity and other kinds of NGOs.

There is a small, but growing body of work on environmental NGOs (e.g., Comfort & Blankenship, 2018; Coward, 2010; Dai, Zeng, & Wang, 2017; Krøvel, 2012; Lück, Wozniak, & Wessler, 2016; Reese, 2015; Spyksma, 2019). But there is still very little on other kinds of important non-governmental organizations, including disability lobby groups (Wright, 2018), feminist organizations (Minić, 2014), indigenous rights NGOs (Mercado, 2015), worker cooperatives, and trade unions (Denčik & Wilkin, 2015). In addition, there is a need for more work to be conducted outside Europe and North America in order to enable more effective comparisons, and to develop general theory. Some valuable research has taken place in Africa (e.g., Jones, 2017; Shaker & Falzone, 2015; Wright, 2018), China (e.g., Dai et al., 2017; Reese, 2015), Latin America (e.g., McPherson, 2015A, 2015B; Waisbord, 2011), and the Pacific (e.g., Spyksma, 2019), but these kinds of studies are still relatively thin on the ground.

Moreover, there is a need for scholars to think more flexibly about the ways in which journalists and NGOs work together. Scholarship has traditionally focused on NGO press officers offering their material directly to journalists, through emails, phone calls, or via their own websites and electronic distribution lists (Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Fenton, 2010). Alternatively, researchers have focused on the longstanding tradition of NGOs embedding reporters with them on field trips to remote areas: offering them not only transport and accommodation, but also providing them interviewees, fixers or interpreters in order to try and influence the narrative framing of news items (Franks, 2013).

But newer research has demonstrated that journalists and NGO workers work together to co-produce journalistic content in other ways, many of which relate to online media. For example, on field trips, an NGO worker may take the photos, whilst the journalist conducts the interviews for an audio slideshow (Wright, 2018). Alternatively, NGO workers and news outlets may work closely together over longer periods of time to produce sophisticated interactive media projects (Jones, 2017). Whilst international conferences and summits afford NGOs the opportunity to negotiate shared interpretative frames (Lück et al., 2016), and/ or to exert more subtle and cumulative forms of influence on the understandings of "public good" within mainstream journalism (Russell, 2013).

Furthermore, the mass casualization of media production means that it is often no longer appropriate to take a binary view of NGO–journalist relations, as freelancers are often involved. But the effects of freelancing on NGO journalism are just beginning to be explored. Freelancers often take commissions from both kinds of organizations, or syndicate material on from one to the other at a later date—leading to results which the NGO did not necessarily intend (Wright, 2016A, 2016B, 2018). Freelancers may acquiesce with clients' requirements to cope with their precarity (Wright, 2018), try to compromise by blending visual traditions (Grayson, 2014), or participate in arguments about framing between NGOs and other powerful stakeholders (Conrad, 2015).

The growth of freelancing has also prompted NGOs to take on other kinds of managerial or financial functions, which were previously the preserve of news organizations. For example, NGOs sometimes pay freelance journalists a day rate to write articles for mainstream news outlets about their projects, following an "embedded" trip with them (Cooper, 2018). Although, this is relatively new amongst Western journalists, it has long been common practice in countries where journalists have always been poorly paid, such as Bangladesh (Biswas, 2007) and Ethiopia (Dirbaba, 2010; Lodamo & Skjerdal, 2009). NGOs may also provide journalists with training courses or workshops on issues of concern to them, and those involved in media assistance programs may fund and run news outlets, including radio stations, newspapers and news websites (Berger, 2010; Schiffrin, 2010; Scott, 2014).

Finally, the rapid growth of freelancing has prompted some NGOs to take on some of the communicative functions which used to be facilitated by news organizations' newsgathering operations. For instance, the Vulture Club and other closed Facebook groups run by NGOs—most notably Human Rights Watch—allow freelancers working in war zones and other hostile environments to swop contacts, advice about how to source visas, fixers or interpreters, and health and safety tips (Murrell, 2014; Pendry, 2015). So there are many different ways in which we can conceptualize NGOs as news organizations, but in order to avoid overlapping too much with other entries, the focus will be on NGOs' engagement in the production, curation and dissemination of news content.

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Photojournalism, Atrocity, and Aid

Several different factors have combined with one another to shape NGOs' shift into the regular production of news content. These causal factors include widespread cost-cutting in many areas of the news industry and a related reduction in the numbers of foreign and correspondent posts, increased competition between NGOs for fundraising, and the increasingly mediatized nature of politics (Powers, 2018). The increased speed demanded by a 24/7 news cycle, the visuality of online news, and the advent of social media also tend to be seen as significant causal factors (Cooper, 2018; Fenton, 2010; Wright, 2018). So researchers just beginning to think about this area of study may be forgiven for thinking that NGOs' engagement in news production is a largely contemporary phenomenon, with few historical precedents.

But that would be inaccurate. Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, the predecessors of 21st-century NGOs—pressure groups—cultivated close relations with the mainstream press, and/or published their own periodicals. In the United Kingdom, this included Antislavery, Anti-Corn Law, Temperance and Women's Suffrage organizations (Harrison, 1982; Tusan, 2005). Many newspapers were also amenable to working with these pressure groups to run campaigns, and the Anti-Corn Law League even provided financial subsidies to papers sympathetic to its cause (Harrison, 1982).

However, perhaps the most compelling example of the historical roots of contemporary NGO journalism is provided by the transatlantic pressure group, the Congo Reform Association, because of its focus on visual media. Members of this association and their networks of in-country activists used what was then cutting-edge media technology—the Kodak Brownie camera—to provide visual "proof" of the atrocities committed by King Leopold 11 of Belgium in the Congo (Grant, 2015; Sliwinski, 2006). There are striking parallels between such practices and the NGO journalism practiced by many human rights groups. It may be argued that the difference between the two lies in the professionalization of NGO workers' journalistic practice. But not all 21st-century human rights groups are professionalized, and the Congo Reform Association had many features of professionalized journalistic practice.

In addition to printing images of atrocity in pamphlets, missionary periodicals, magazines and mainstream newspapers, its founder also set up his own newspaper, the *West African Mail* (Grant, 2015). This newspaper—the archives of which are held at the London School of Economics—contains detailed instances of investigative, campaigning journalism, including some victim interviews and "eye witness" accounts, published alongside posed photographic portraits of mutilated Congolese people. Yet the *West African Mail* is not simply the newsletter of an advocacy organization: the paper also contains business articles, lists of stocks and shares, and adverts aimed at those trading in the region: a strange mix to contemporary eyes.

Many of the other news-making tactics of the Congo Reform Association also resonate with contemporary NGO practices, including the repeated use of images of children in

need, the creation of newsworthy spectacles, such as magic lantern lectures, and the heavy reliance on celebrities, including the famous authors, Mark Twain and Arthur Conan Doyle (Hochschild, 2006). So there appears to be a rather fuzzy dividing line between the journalistic activities carried out by historical pressure groups and those performed by 21st-century NGOs: involving far more continuities, and far fewer ruptures, than is often thought.

The historical news-making practices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also appear to have played a powerful role in shaping contemporary NGO journalism—even though the ICRC is not an NGO itself, but instead has a unique status within international law. However, the ICRC was one of the first aid agencies to deliberately produce newsworthy media content, and its actions in this regard have shaped the ways in which NGOs engage with mainstream journalism in the 21st century. As early as the 1920s, the ICRC was producing cinéreels about its work (Natale, 2010), and by the 1950s, it was regularly working with press agencies and renowned war photographers. Its intention here was not only to raise money and awareness of the ICRC's work, but to do so by encouraging mainstream newspapers to use the photos it had commissioned. For example, in 1956, the organization launched an appeal for Hungary and the Middle East with the Magnum photographic agency. As Robert Melley of the ICRC's Information Service explained, "Although the experiment appears expensive at first sight . . . it is likely to lead to the circulation by the major newspapers of ICRC photos taken by the elite of reporters" (1956, cited in Gorin, 2012, p. 1374).

Following the rapid rise in the popularity and respectability of photojournalism during the 1960s, it became normal for many NGOs to hire well-respected photojournalists, in order to win the attention of newspapers, current affairs magazines, and sometimes even television (Hallas, 2012). Such images appeared to be taken far more spontaneously than the obviously posed images disseminated by the Congo Reform Association, as photographers during this period were greatly influenced by Cartier-Bresson's idea of the desirability of capturing "the decisive moment" (1957, quoted in Hallas, 2012, p. 102). That is, "the simultaneous recognition, in the fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as the precise organization of forms which gives that event its proper expression" (Cartier-Bresson, 1952, quoted in Hallas, 2012, p. 102). Nonetheless, the production of such images was highly structured by the norms of the art market, journalism and related forms of social documentary photography. These include ideas about the progressive potential of the "concerned photographer" (Capa, 1968), who acts as a moral or political witness to the plight of others: highlighting their dignity and suffering in ways which stimulate audiences to call for social change.

Some of the most acclaimed examples of NGO-commissioned photojournalism include Sabastião Salgado's images of the Sahel famine in the 1980s, which were taken as part of a commission for Médecins sans Frontières, many of which were republished by the international press. Other notable examples include Tim Hetherington's depictions of the Liberian civil war for Human Rights Watch, and the work of Gideon Mendelson HIV/AIDS for the Treatment Action Campaign and the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and

Malaria (all discussed in Hallas, 2012). Much of the photography which NGOs commission and place in news outlets draws from this longstanding tradition of collaboration. Such highly aestheticized images are used extensively in English-language newspapers and current affairs magazines, and within the online photo slideshows published on news websites (Denčik & Allan, 2017; Wright, 2018).

At a time when most photojournalists are self-employed and news commissions are dwindling, working for NGOs allows some photojournalists to continue to do work which they value, including undertaking lengthy field trips (Wright, 2016A). Yet there are lively debates about the ethics of this kind of news production, including matters relating to informed consent, editorial control, and the mythologizing of photojournalism as "as a means of informing the public and bearing witness to injustices and atrocities" (Gürsel, 2016, cited in Denčik & Allan, 2017, p. 1179). There are also serious questions about which kinds of photojournalistic gaze predominate, given the alleged preference of news outlets for European and North American photographers (Jayawardane, 2017). Such concerns then play into broader concerns about the creation of distant suffering as an engaging spectacle "sold" to privileged media audiences, living comfortable lives far away (Kennedy, 2009). So we have to ask serious ethical and political questions about how NGO-commissioned photojournalism plays into the broader, visual cultures of non-governmental activism: helping INGOs to "constitute particular publics, advance claims in the world, and to intervene politically" (McLagan & McKee, 2012, p. 10).

Yet there is still scope for further research to establish how INGOs' different approaches to the representation of rapid onset and long-term crises is manifest in news texts, including the ways in which written (and/or audio) text relates to NGO-commissioned photographs (Denčik & Allan, 2017). Useful comparisons might then be made with news texts which include images provided by international development and other kinds of NGOs (Dogra, 2012). In particular, it would be interesting to explore whether NGO commissions have led to many photojournalists developing blended genres, such as the "NGO reportage" which Grayson created (2014).

The photojournalistic practices of environmental NGOs also deserve far greater attention at a time of rapidly escalating climate change and rapidly reducing biodiversity. Although some interesting work has been done on the World Wildlife Fund (Coward, 2010), as well as environmental NGOs in China (Dai et al., 2017; Reese, 2015) and Norway (Krøvel, 2012). Of particular interest here is research in the involvement of major INGOs in the promotion of what geographers call "spectacular environmentalism" (Goodman, Littler, Brockington, & Boycoff, 2016). That is, the visual images informed by grand destruction narratives, which are produced for mass, international consumption. Finally, it would be fascinating to study how NGO workers may make news by remediating press photographs which their organizations did not commission, following an incident in which Peter Bouckaert of Human Rights Watch made headlines by retweeting an image of a drowned refugee child, Alan Kurdi, which then went viral (Fehrenbach & Rodgno, 2015).

Television and Video

NGOs' engagement in TV news reporting contrasts strongly with these highly aestheticized photographic approaches, as it is often seen as being characterized by very graphic, sensationalistic depictions of suffering: what Agamben would call "bare life" (1998). These kinds of imagery became dominant in television in the late 20th century, with the most famous "peak" of such coverage occurring during the Ethiopian famine of 1984–1985. In particular, the embedding of the BBC's Michael Buerk with the U.S.-based NGO, World Vision, is claimed to have marked a watershed, leading to ongoing forms of uncritical "trust" between aid agencies and news organizations (Franks, 2008, 2013).

The portrayal of Ethiopians in Buerk's reports as silent, emaciated and passive victims was widely criticized by diasporic groups, who viewed the coverage as racist—even though it triggered a massive fundraising drive, including Band Aid and Live Aid (Philo, 1993). Some critics also argue that the TV news coverage of the Ethiopian famine illustrates the risks of journalists being taken in by aid agencies' narratives about famines and other humanitarian crises: asserting that simplistic and decontextualized morality tales may lead to large public donations, but they don't help to shape informed and considered humanitarian responses (Franks, 2013; Philo, 1993). In this case, the exclusion of details about the Ethiopian civil war from news reports can be seen as effacing the Ethiopian government's efforts to displace rebel-supporting civilians from their lands, as well as failing to help external publics realise that aid could be stolen by armed groups (Franks, 2013).

The row over aid agencies' role in the TV coverage of the Ethiopian famine prompted much soul-searching about journalists' and NGO workers' respective responsibilities in the following years. Oxfam produced a seminal report about the ways in which news shaped highly negative, and potentially harmful, perceptions of Africa (van der Gaag & Nash, 1987). This in turn influenced NGO umbrella groups' production of guidelines regarding the production of "dignified" images (Lidichi, 1999). But research in the East African drought of 2011 shows that similar kinds of Othering imagery are still used in news coverage (Magee, 2011). This seems likely to have been shaped by NGOs' own lapse into stereotypical imagery, as "inconsistency and double standards" still exist within international aid organizations: given the tension between internal image guidelines and the "fundraising logic" of portraying "a crying emaciated baby on the ground" (Seu, Orgad, & Flanagan, 2012, p. 4).

So arguments about NGOs' engagement in the production of news, especially TV news, are often focused on news about Africa, with aid workers and journalists continuing to be accused of colluding with one another in order to construct images of the continent as a chronic basket case in need of rescue by northern saviors (Lugo-Ocando & Malaolu, 2014). It is questionable how fair such a generalization is given the highly selective nature of research in this area, which often focuses on the media representation of extremely negative events (Scott, 2017). Some NGOs, such as Oxfam, have certainly

begun to create and disseminate deliberatively upbeat representations of the continent (Dogra, 2012; Scott, 2014). It is unclear how much of this kind of material reaches news outlets, although positivistic media content created in collaboration with a sub-Saharan disability NGO, the Kenyan Paraplegic Organization, was widely adopted by TV news programs, online news sites and print newspapers in 2012 (Wright, 2018).

Human rights organizations engage in a number of different kinds of video journalism which spread far beyond sub-Saharan Africa, and involve a mixture of professionals and amateurs. Media savvy international NGOs, like Human Rights Watch, which is dominated by ex-journalists, and has extensive networks of trained media staff, are able to shoot their own, technically accomplished video of violent attacks on civilians and other kinds of human rights abuses (Powers, 2016A). Human Rights Watch also purchases and disseminates video shot by professional journalists, to help them lobby for the arrest of named individuals under international law (Wright, 2016B). Moreover, both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International collate, verify, reframe and remediate video shot by amateurs (McPherson, 2015A, 2015B).

Meanwhile, grassroots international human right organizations, like WITNESS, specialize in shooting and collating video via networks of amateur in-country activists (Farrell & Allan, 2015). This includes working in partnership groups of local activists, such as the Papo Reto collective, which operates in Brazilian favelas (Shaer, 2015, cited in Powers, 2016C). Finally, prolific, amateur human rights NGOs, such as the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression and the Violence Documentation Center, film and disseminate video accounts of atrocities carried out during the Syrian civil war (Chouliaraki, 2015). Video footage provided by all of these human rights NGOs has been found in mainstream news outlets, as well as being disseminated through NGOs' own websites and social media accounts, including YouTube.

Journalistic debates about the use of such material have tended to focus on questions of veracity, after examples of false or mislabeled video were found in the output of human rights organizations covering Syria (McPherson, 2015B). However, NGO footage of the Ghouta gas attacks, which was initially questioned, turned out to have been a fair representation of events (Chouliaraki, 2015). More nuanced critical questions can also be raised about the ways in which NGOs and journalists reframe and remediate the meaning/s of these visual texts, as well as negotiate tensions between doubt and credibility in news output (Chouliaraki, 2015). Important areas for further research here include the efforts of film-makers, human rights NGOs and journalists to square norms of objective truth-telling with issues of subjectivity, including, in some cases, film-makers' explicit commitment to certain kinds of political activism (Farrell & Allan, 2015).

Social Media and User-Generated Content

The relatively rough, shaky camera work of amateurs—which is usually shot on handheld DV cameras or mobile phones—appears to have been shaped far less by mainstream journalistic norms than by the aesthetics of citizen journalism. In this way, it evokes

notions of immediacy, authenticity and inclusive participation (Allan, 2013). Given the critical concerns outlined above, an important area of critical discussion is therefore the extent to which the entrance of amateur groups into the production of multimedia, which is then disseminated through social media, challenges the dominance of major INGOs in news making (Powers, 2016C).

Reese (2015) uses a fascinating Chinese case study to demonstrate that major environmental INGOs can work collaboratively with local NGOs and amateur activists to disseminate video and photographic evidence of an environmental disaster across borders. McPherson's work (2015A, 2015B) on the ways in which major human rights INGOs' verify the video shot by amateurs, and INGOs' subsequent collaboration with national and international news organizations, also seems to speak to a sense of progressive collaboration.

Yet Cooper (2015, 2018) argues that the spread of User-Generated Content (UGC) through social media threatened the cozy, symbiotic relationships which international aid agencies had with major news organizations, undermining NGO workers' interpretative control over how other kinds of disasters were understood. Cooper asserts that this sense of threat was not only what triggered NGO workers to move into making their own multimedia content, but it was also what shaped their decision to "clone" social media content, such as blogs and Twitter-thons. By using social media, Cooper concludes, these INGOs may benefit from association with the norms of inclusivity, diversity and empowerment, whilst still centering on the voices of relatively privileged actors, rather than on those of the poor and dispossessed.

Another important area of critical debate about social media involves the extent to which it enables smaller NGOs to communicate their journalism directly to audiences, and/or to journalists, without investing in an expensive team of PR specialists. Research by Thrall, Stecula, and Sweet (2014) in human rights organizations suggested that social media is not a panacea, as the fragmentation of audiences on social media meant that smaller NGOs struggled to get any attention at all. However, there are some circumstances in which smaller NGOs have managed to gain larger audiences, and get their video and photos adopted by news outlets, using social media. The first circumstance is when few other media producers are present on the ground during a major running news story. For example, the local branch of the environmental organization, 350.org, in Vanuatu became a major provider of multimedia journalism, when Cyclone Pam hit the Pacific island in 2015 (Spyksma, 2019).

But the second instance in which smaller NGOs place their video or photos in mainstream journalism is when they create a newsworthy event relating to the affordances of social media itself. A video going viral would be a good example of this, such as *Kony 2012*, a quasi-journalistic film produced by the small, U.S.-based INGO, Invisible Children Inc., to press for the arrest of the Ugandan rebel leader, Joseph Kony. It became the most popular viral video of all time: achieving over 40 million hits on YouTube in four days (Gregory, 2012; Harding, 2012). This was not only covered extensively in news coverage, but the

popularity of the video also had a longer-term effect on news making, prompting journalists to reflect deeply on their own coverage of African conflict and the issue of child soldiers (Nothias, 2013). Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that this viral video, together with other factors, changed the framing of journalists' subsequent coverage of conflict elsewhere on the African continent (Wright, 2018).

There is far less research on occasions when a sudden boom in social media activity has enabled small NGOs based outside the United States and Europe to gain significant news audiences, and/or uptake of NGO content by mainstream journalists. That which does exist suggests that this kind of impact is very difficult for small, resource-poor NGOs to achieve without the assistance of external actors who possess the necessary financial and cultural capital. For instance, the Kenyan Paraplegic Organization managed to obtain large amounts of news coverage, including the placement of videos and photos in Kenyan and international news outlets. This was triggered by a "social media storm" engineered by commercial telecommunications, advertising, PR and digital marketing firms, who worked in collaboration with the NGO to develop a technologically sophisticated fundraising campaign, incorporating the use of GPS, Twitter, Facebook and a mobile donation platform, M-PESA (Wright, 2018).

Like *Kony 2012*, the social media "storm" which formed the main plank of the Kenyan Paraplegic Organization's campaign was deliberately engineered by powerful groups, rather than arising spontaneously, and its journalistic value was questionable (Wright, 2018). So it is important to avoid assuming that social media enables smaller NGOs to access mainstream news in more inclusive, grassroots or "bottom up" ways than other forms of NGO news making. However, there is still much work to be done to illuminate how different kinds of NGOs, including smaller and/or majority world NGOs, use social media to conduct and disseminate their own journalism, as well as the extent to which social media can be used to enhance journalists' uptake of NGO material.

New Media Technologies: Drone Filming

Nevertheless, researchers interested in NGOs' engagement in new media would be wise to avoid the temptation to become overly fixated with social media, lest they miss other, emerging trends in NGO news making. A key area which deserves more critical attention has been NGOs' development of remotely controlled cameras, whether these are located on satellites (Denčik & Allan, 2017), on the headsets of aid workers (Frontline Club, 2015), or on Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), otherwise known as drones. The latter seem particularly popular with NGO workers at both large and small organizations, which may be located in Europe and North America as well as within southern, majority world countries.

Animal rights, conservation and environmental groups began to adopt UAVs to document pollution, animal conditions and illegal activities from around 2010 onward (Goldberg, Corcoran, & Pickard, 2013), but drone filming rapidly spread to other kinds of organizations. For instance, community-based NGOs in Indonesia have used drones as a

means of "counter-mapping," in order to resist land grabs and the depredations of mining companies (Radjawali & Pye, 2017). Human rights activists have employed them to provide proof of the targeting of civilians during warfare as a visual evidence which is used in cases considered by the International Criminal Court (Lichtman & Nair, 2015). Finally, humanitarian and development workers used UAVs in disaster response following the Haiti earthquake in 2010, Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, and the Nepal earthquake in 2015. These uses included studying drone imagery to establish which areas were worst affected, to assist search and rescue missions, and to map out which routes could be used to deliver aid (Strong & Zafra, 2016).

However, drones are not just used by NGOs as a means of carrying out traditional forms of NGO work more effectively, they also help NGOs to make news, either through journalists' coverage of NGOs' use of drones or through their adoption of the video and stills captures by NGOs' UAVs. The boom in producing drone imagery for this purpose can be illustrated through reference to the Nepal earthquake in 2015. Less than a week after the event, the Nepalese government banned unlicensed drones, because so many were in operation that local people complained. Nepalese politicians also became concerned about how such images might be used at a later date. But one of the main reasons why there were so many drones in the air was that aid agencies were using UAVs to gather footage for news outlets (Strong & Zafra, 2016).

Journalists' eagerness to use NGOs' drone imagery does not seem to have abated. For instance, the aid agency, Oxfam, published drone images of the burning oil fields in Iraq on *BBC News* (2017a) and *Vice News* (2016), as well as providing drone footage of crowds of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda to the British newspaper *The Telegraph* (Midgeley, 2017). Indeed, aerial footage of refugees seems to be particularly popular with journalists. Recently, the United Kingdom's Disasters Emergency Committee—which represents many different aid agencies—acquired drone film of Rohingya refugees from freelance journalists, which they successfully placed in more than 20 mainstream news outlets, including the BBC (2017B).

NGOs also seem to be according far more importance to drone filming in their journalistic work. For instance, a job advertised by Greenpeace in 2016 for an investigative journalist portrayed drone filming as central to the INGO's work in this area (Chamberlain, 2017). However, research on NGO journalism has only just started to mention NGO workers' drones in passing, without exploring it in much detail (Denčik & Allan, 2017). With the notable exception of Chamberlain (2017), most studies on drone journalism also tend not to explore the NGO–journalist relations in any depth: focusing instead on questions regarding legality and safety, as well as ethical concerns regarding privacy, conflict of interest, perspective and the credibility of imagery offered by all kinds of third parties (Culver, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2013).

Yet this new area of media production raises fascinating critical questions. What kinds of processes are involved? Is drone imagery shot in ways which are deliberately "multipurpose," in the sense of being intended for placement in mainstream journalism,

at the same time as enabling other forms of NGO work? If these practices are separate from one another, how do they differ? Do journalists coproduce this work together with NGOs—or do NGOs pitch it to journalists afterward?

Moreover, how is NGOs' drone journalism supported and enabled by others? What roles are played by local activists or "citizen journalists" who aren't NGO staff? In what ways do other kinds of non-profits, like the Humanitarian UAV Network, play into NGOs' practice of drone journalism? What about other kinds of NGOs, like Conservation Drones? What is the relevance of the private foundations which encourage and fund NGOs' use of UAVs, such as the Omidyar Network, which was established by the founder of Ebay? Finally, what incentives are provided by awarding bodies, such as the international "Drones for Good" Award, which is run by the government of the United Arab Emirates?

So this area is rich in important critical questions, the exploration of which could help to develop our understanding of what is happening to the boundaries between journalism and NGO work, as well as the boundaries which both have with other fields of political and economic activity. However, perhaps the most important questions involve asking: what ways of seeing and being seen are prioritized? Who sees and who is seen? And what is rendered unseen or invisible by such technologies? In this way, we could start to consider how drone imagery is reshaping the highly visual nature of non-governmental activism, and related forms of journalism (McLagan & McKee, 2012).

UAVs help NGOs to give media audiences an impression of the location and magnitude of particular kinds of problems, as well as facilitating the representation of areas and situations which were previously inaccessible. These new abilities may, in turn, facilitate NGOs' ability to visually represent dangerous areas or authoritarian regimes, in ways which may improve NGOs' ability to hold nation states, businesses and other actors to account.

Yet at the same time, NGOs' use of UAVs is inherently problematic. Drone filming is shot at great distance and tends to produce spectacular imagery informed by grand narratives, which may make it more difficult to attend to detail and nuance. Thus drone filming seems—perhaps more than other kinds of imagery—to risk effacing causes and contexts which cannot be easily seen by media audiences. This risk may be exacerbated if drone filming begins to supplant other kinds of NGO practices, such as the interviewing of eyewitnesses.

Drone filming is also a form of surveillance, over which those on the ground have little or no control. The aesthetics of drone images also resonate uncomfortably with what we know about imperialistic gaze, which legitimized the presence of European colonists through the use of commanding, panoramic, birds-eye or "Lord-of-all-he-surveys" pictures (Pratt, 1992; Spurr, 1993). So we have to ask difficult political questions about the extent to which NGOs' use of UAVs, together with their practice of other kinds of journalism, justifies their intervention, in ways which have ramifications for the roll-back of the nation state, and for broader North–South relations.

PR, Networked Journalism and Mixed Effects

So what kinds of academic theory are used to think about NGOs' production of news journalism? One of the earliest critics writing about NGOs' engagement in news making was Benthall (1993, p. 3), who argued that aid agencies must adapt to the "media regimes" of news organizations, which includes focusing on disasters and other humanitarian crises. Yet Benthall's attention to the moral, political and organizational dilemmas this created for aid agencies was somewhat lost in the second wave of work in this area. These later studies followed the mass shift toward NGO professionalization in the 2000s, and the cost-cutting in journalism triggered by industry deregulation, the expansion of online media, and the global economic crisis of 2008–2009, which marked a dramatic drop in advertising revenue. Such scholars tended to group journalists' use of NGO material together with other kinds of PR, in order to demonstrate their increased reliance on others and the increasing prevalence of reversioning practices.

Key texts include the work of researchers at Cardiff University, whose quantitative work grounded a critique of the effects of journalists having far less money and time to invest in traditional newsgathering and fact-checking tasks (Lewis, Williams, & Franklin, 2008A, 2008B). Yet two important points should be made here. Firstly, the Cardiff team, who were largely studying the reversioning of written text in U.K. news outlets, found that other kinds of actors, like governments and businesses, were far more successful at placing material than NGOs. Secondly, they portrayed journalists as being actively engaged in a dance, albeit one led by PR professionals (Gans, 1979, discussed in Lewis et al., 2008A).

This contrasts with *Flat Earth News* (2008) a popular book written by the freelance journalist, Nick Davies, which is based on work by the Cardiff team. However, Davies comes to somewhat different conclusions: arguing that journalists passively and uncritically "churn" out large amounts of reversioned material, provided by the elite organizations with the resources to employ large numbers of PR professionals. Davies portrays NGOs as being highly complicit in this "churnalism": asserting that they seriously distort public discourse along with other powerful actors, in ways which reproduce a single, dominant worldview.

Franks's (2013) detailed historical study of news representations of the Ethiopian famine in 1984–1985 endorses the view that journalists' overreliance on aid agencies can be harmful, whether in the form of "embedded" trips or more contemporary uses of NGO content. Using detailed interviews and archival evidence to illuminate journalistic and political decision-making at the time, Franks demonstrates that acceptance of NGOs' narrative frames undermined the ability of journalists to critically inform discussion about how to respond to the crisis. Yet seminal work by Cottle and Nolan (2007) and Fenton (2010) argues that NGOs may be just as thoroughly damaged by engaging in mainstream news production. The former use Altheide and Snow's concept of "media logic" to argue

that major aid agencies have come to see the world, and their place within it, in accordance with mainstream news norms (1979, discussed in Cottle & Nolan, 2007).

In contrast, Fenton analyses the news practices of different kinds of NGOs, using Gandy's notion of "information subsidies," which refers to the time and financial savings that PR specialists give to journalists, by providing them with ready-made forms of newsworthy material (1982, discussed in Fenton, 2010). In return, PR specialists are believed to gain strategic advantages within mediated discourse, including framing problems, their causes and proposed solutions, in ways which reflect their worldviews and serve their strategic interests. However, Fenton argues that NGOs' commitment to news making undermines their alternative cultures and worldviews, so they simply "clone" the news, rather than radically challenge news norms. Thus we have an interesting situation, wherein NGO work and journalism are viewed as colonizing one another, to the detriment of both.

Nevertheless, in the 2000s a smaller camp of more optimistic critics also started to emerge. These scholars tended to view NGOs' contributions to news coverage as part of a shift toward more fluid, dialogic and participatory forms of "networked journalism": arguing that this had the potential to enhance the diversity, geographic reach and social engagement of news through more open, dialogic and participatory approaches. Work in this area includes early studies by Beckett (2008) and Sambrook (2010), as well as later research by Reese (2015) and Yanacopulos (2015). However, it is noticeable that Lűck, Wozniak, and Wessler (2016) have dropped much of the enthusiastic rhetoric about the progressive potential of new media technology, which characterized earlier texts. Instead, their work on heterogeneous "networks of coproduction" focuses on the ways in which such networks are formed through shared physical spaces at international conferences: viewing them as enabling NGOs and news outlets in some ways, without necessarily being any more inclusive of marginalized groups than other forms of journalism.

So a third wave of research has risen, which tries to avoid the polarized "boon or bane" arguments of previous research (Powers, 2017, 2018). Instead, this body of work attends to the potentially mixed effects of heterogeneous kinds of NGO news production. Waisbord (2011) was one of the founders of this approach, using his study of Latin American NGO–journalist coalitions to outline how different kinds of "journalistic logic" are formed. He sees these forms of "journalistic logic" as being shaped by the varied interactions which NGOs and journalists have with one another, regarding particular sets of news values and media formats, as well as different sets of labor conditions and editorial positions. McPherson's analysis of the kinds of journalism carried out by human rights NGOs in Mexico also outlines some of the positive effects of NGO-provided "information subsidies" (Gandy, 1982, discussed in McPherson, 2015B). McPherson argues that the "verification subsidies" which such NGOs provide to newspaper have significant normative value in some ways, as well as being problematic in others. But before we go on to discuss the most complex work in this area, we need to backtrack a little to outline the theoretical developments on which such new evaluative models have been built.

Organizations, Institutions, Fields, and Moral Economies

The critical shift toward acknowledging the potentially heterogeneous forms of NGO news making started with critics beginning to draw from other bodies of theory, outside media studies. Orgad (2013) was one of the first to employ organizational theory, linking an attention to the highly visual nature of humanitarian and international development communication to an exploration of the profound tensions within and between aid agencies. Her work highlights the conflicts between the teams of NGO workers associated with fundraising or marketing, and advocacy or policy making. But Orgad also explores the tension between NGO workers' desire to represent themselves as a coherent community, and their economic need to differentiate their organizations from others in a crowded market.

As part of this argument, Orgad (2013) discusses the intersection between two branches of humanitarianism. These are "the 'chemical' branch, of humanitarian emergency-focused organizations and the 'alchemical' branch, which includes international development and human rights organizations which aim to eradicate the root causes of suffering (Barnett, 2011, discussed in Orgad, 2013, p. 297). Orgad's work can be usefully read alongside that of Nolan and Mikami (2012), who discuss different tensions which exist between aid workers' abstract humanitarian ideals and their everyday practices. This includes an attention to the unease of some NGO workers regarding their construction of an "emergency imaginary" in and through media representation (Calhoun, 2010, discussed in Nolan & Mikami, 2012). But ultimately, Nolan and Mikami argue, aid workers tend to legitimize these kinds of media activity by reasoning that there are just some "things we have to do" to raise enough money to carry out relief work.

A second strand of critical thinking draws on institutional theory. Moon (2018) uses this to illuminate the forms of compliance and bargaining exhibited by NGO workers in relation to journalists. She agrees with Nolan and Mikami (2012) that NGO workers may acquiesce to journalists' demands, even when these are at odds with their own values, in order to achieve their organization's goals and strategic objectives. However, she argues that NGO workers may also win concessions from news organizations, particularly on embedded trips where the NGO "controls the itinerary and foots the bill" (Moon, 2018, p. 1023). In so arguing, Moon builds on the work of Powers (2016b) regarding the "path dependence" of NGOs and news organizations, which explores how their structural dependence upon one another is reproduced over time.

Powers (2018) blends institutional theory with Bourdieusian field theory, arguing that NGO work and journalism can be conceptualized as interacting institutional fields, whose relationship to one another is shaped by the relationships which both have to other fields of activity. In particular, he argues that NGOs' prioritization of different kinds of news making is powerfully shaped by their various funding models and different orientations to politics. So Bourdieu's ideas about differentiation and struggle play a key role in Powers's

critical thinking: shaping his innovative and sophisticated approach to the different, but patterned, interactions between news outlets and humanitarian or human rights NGOs.

However, the key question underpinning Powers's work (2016B, 2018) is why NGO workers continue to reproduce professional journalistic norms in a social media era. He argues that there are three main reasons for this. First, he demonstrates that NGOs depend on mainstream news to access funding, not only through public fundraising, but also because they believe that private philanthropic organizations see them as more effective when they participate in news discourse. Second, Powers shows that NGOs believe that they acquire political legitimacy in the eyes of government officials by appearing in mainstream news, which may enable them to influence policy. Third, he sees the sunk costs of NGOs' investment in former journalists and communications technology, as well as forms of social proximity, as working together to perpetuate this state of affairs. Thus, Powers sees NGOs as adapting to mainstream news values, practices and ways of valuing success, grafting their stories onto mainstream news agendas, rather than using social media to communicate in alternative ways.

Comfort and Blankenship (2018) also use Bourdieu's field theory, but in a much looser way—to establish the extent to which environmental NGO workers producing supposedly "alternative" magazines actually conform to the *doxa* of mainstream journalism. While Cooper (2018) uses Bourdieu's field theory to argue that the emergence of UGC, circulated through social media, has provided an external shock to the fields of both journalism and NGO work, radically changing the rules of the game. This shock, she argues, prompted NGO-workers to begin creating multimedia for placement in mainstream journalism. Bust some NGO workers also attempted to use social media to challenge the dominance of mainstream news (such as Oxfam G. B. "Twitter takeover" in 2013 and Save the Children U.K.'s 2012 #hiddencrisis campaign). However, she argues that the latter kind of media activity has declined since the early 2010s, given the centralized management and branding concerns of most INGOs. Instead, Cooper concludes, news organizations and NGOs have become more interested in trying to control, coopt and clone social media content, in order to ensure that they retain their power within the journalistic field.

Finally, Wright (2018) blends field theory with the model of the moral economy to question the different roles played by multiple actors within news production processes. These actors include freelancers, social media participants and professionals working for commercial PR and marketing firms, whom, she argues, construct complex exchange economies which span many countries and fields of activity. She views these exchanges as bringing about the interaction of normative and economic values, so potentially altering participants' ideas of what constitutes "good" work in their respective areas, as well as re/constructing the boundaries between them. In this way, Wright reexamines how "trust" is constructed between NGOs and news organizations, and the nature of the tensions or conflicts between them, as well as illuminating how NGOs' news production is positioned simultaneously within and against commercial markets.

Evaluating Mixed Effects, Understanding Power

So there are a variety of different analytical approaches emerging in the theory about this area of study. Nevertheless, how to analyze and evaluate the potentially mixed effects of NGO news making remains tricky. While Waisbord (2011) indicates his commitment to the concept of 'ideology', Powers (2017) discusses the evaluative potential of different kinds of democratic theory, arguing that NGOs may assist deliberative processes via their commitment to accurate, detailed investigation and specialist expertise. But, he asserts, more radical traditions within liberal representative theory permit greater partiality, so the news-making practices of partisan NGOs may also have value through addressing social peripheries rather than mass audiences or elites. Wright challenges this (2018) by arguing that evaluative approaches which rely on democratic theory risk ethnocentricity. Instead, she interrogates the validity of the normative claims made by NGO workers and journalists by blending moral economy theory with Amartya Sen's work on people's inter-related capabilities (2010, discussed in 2018).

However, ideas about how to evaluate NGO news making are still in their infancy. Developing more nuanced approaches is vital as we move toward analyzing increasingly complex alliances, partnerships and coalitions between NGOs, journalists and others. The media produced by these actors may be placed in mainstream news, but may also be used for other purposes, such as digital mapping or even donor reporting (Wright, 2018). However, in order to move forward we need to better theorize what we mean by "the effects" of NGO news making. Specifically, what kinds of power are NGOs able to gain in and through news production?

One kind of power may involve NGOs fostering the creation of dialogic networks and cosmopolitan spaces with the potential to enable progressive political change (Reese, 2015; Yanacopulos, 2015). But other critics think it is more likely that they will use the news media as a kind of stand-in for public opinion (Lang, 2013; Powers, 2018), thus enabling inter-elite contestation (Wright, 2018). Still others see NGOs as having an agenda-setting function within the mainstream news (Krøvel, 2012) or talk about NGOs' ability to frame countries, issues and events in ways which are consonant with their perspectives (Franks, 2013; Lugo-Ocando & Malaolu, 2014). Finally, Ecker-Erhardt (2010), Powers (2017), and Wright (2018) all suggest that NGOs are sometimes consecrated as authoritative "experts" through news, in ways which may help them to gain other kinds of political access—such as gaining places in working groups developing international legislation. Indeed, Yanacopulos (2005) claims that news making and other forms of more obvious political involvement work together to enable NGOs to engage in global governance.

A key issue underlying all of these approaches is the extent to which NGOs shape the imagined, and often highly visual, relationships which news audiences have with distant others. However, we know that audiences can (and frequently do) resist the calls to action

encoded in news and other media texts (Seu & Orgad, 2017). Research about the ways in which NGOs may frame events for policy makers via mainstream news is also based on research which is more than two decades old (Gowing, 1994; Livingston, 1997, cited in Franks, 2015). It may still be the case that NGOs are able to exercise influence when no governmental strategy has been agreed upon (Franks, 2015), but changes in politics, and the advent of online and social media, may well have altered this relationship beyond recognition. Thus the next wave of research in this area would do well to explore the various kinds of power which different kinds of NGOs are able to acquire and/or exercise through news production. After all, these may be significantly different to the kinds of power that NGO workers think that they acquire (Powers, 2016C).

Yet establishing media influence is a notoriously difficult enterprise, as researchers cannot abstract it from other causal factors. The practices involved in NGO news production are also changing very rapidly: shifting from relatively straightforward binary exchanges between NGOs and news organizations to much more complicated political economies involving social media participants, private foundations, governments, commercial businesses and other kinds of media organizations. Yet in seeking to move into the sometimes dazzling world of multiple media actors, social media and high tech, researchers should not forget the need to address what is perhaps the most neglected area of this kind of research: that is, the perspectives and experiences of those represented in NGO journalism (Warrington & Crombie, 2017).

Digital Resources

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