



# KONY 2012

- Knowledge and Responsibility in Development Campaigns

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates how the social movement Invisible Children frames meaning for action in its Kony2012 campaign, how we can understand such framing of meaning for action as knowledge, and whether Invisible Children is responsible for the implications of such framings. The thesis integrates the subjects of International Development Studies and Philosophy and will integrate theoretical aspects and discussions from both subjects.

Invisible Children is a US-based social movement that aims to remedy the situation for Ugandan children affected by atrocities committed by the rebel group the Lord Resistance Army and its leader Joseph Kony. Invisible Children is an interesting case as it has been extremely successful in motivating young Americans to engage in the campaign by framing meaning for action through a simple storyline with a clear, powerful message and an easy solution.

Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action is analysed through Snow and Benford's (2000) theory of collective action frames' three components: diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing. These framing components show: 1) Invisible Children is assigning blame and responsibility for the Ugandans' suffering to Kony and taking the responsibility to remedy the Ugandans' suffering. 2) It is targeting preselected celebrities and policymakers to spread the campaign and leverage the US government to make a military intervention to stop Kony. And 3) Invisible Children uses symbolic values of universalism and benevolence to motivate its members to act on its behalf.

I question whether we can understand the framing of meaning for action as knowledge through Nancy Daukas (2006) by analysing whether we can assign trust to Invisible Children's assessment of the Ugandan history and thereby understand it as knowledge. The findings show that Invisible Children is too self-confident in its epistemic character which keeps it from making the necessary epistemic investigations to be trustworthy in its assessments.

I discuss whether Invisible Children is outcome, remedial and epistemically responsible for the implications of such framings through David Miller (2007) and Lorraine Code (1987). I find that Invisible Children is epistemic irresponsible in its assessments of northern Ugandan history. It is outcome responsible for its framing of meaning for action as it could have foreseen the implications of its actions and epistemic beliefs. Invisible Children is right in taking on the responsibility to remedy the situation for the northern Ugandans, but it is not behaving responsibly in its effort because it does not give agency to the Ugandans in its campaigning. The thesis concludes that Invisible Children is morally culpable in its framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign as its framing produced more harm than good for the northern Ugandans.

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## Map of Uganda

# Map of Uganda



## 1. Introduction

The thesis focuses on how the social movement Invisible Children frames information to make meaning for action in its Kony2012 campaign, and whether we can understand such meaning making as knowledge. Invisible Children is a US-based social movement dedicated to help the Ugandan children affected by the atrocities committed by the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) an Ugandan rebel group. Invisible Children built its Kony2012 campaign upon a form of documentary storytelling about the Ugandan war and its effects on the children. Its aim is to end “the longest-running war in Africa” and bring a permanent end to the LRA atrocities in the region.

Invisible Children is an interesting case, as it has been extremely successful in framing the information in the Kony2012 campaign to make meaning for action, and motivating young people to act on its behalf. The campaign portrays the war in Uganda through a simple storyline with a clear, powerful message and an easy solution to end it. It is therefore interesting to investigate how Invisible Children has been so successful in motivating its members, and framing meaning for action, and whether we can understand such framing of meaning for action as knowledge.

The thesis is integrated between the subjects of International Development Studies and Philosophy, and will integrate theoretical aspects and discussions from both subjects. Much International Development Studies literature surrounding social movements describes how such entities create meaning for action. Examples of this include: “collective contentious politics” (Tarrow 2011), “collective actions frames” (Benford&Snow 2000, 1992), “frames of protest” (Noakes&Johnston 2005) “transnational advocacy networks” (Keck&Sikkink 1998). Newer literature explicit focus on how social movements create meaning for action through the use of Internet: “Cyberprotest” (de Donk et all 2004) and “Cyberactivism” (McCaughey&Ayers 2003). Additionally researchers have argued that we should respect social movements as meaning makers who produce knowledge and new understandings of specific issues (Casas-Cortès, et al 2008, Kurzman 2008).

Thus such literature is important as it can be used to analyse how Invisible Children creates meaning for action, however, while it is a useful analytical tool, it is not critical and does not question which implications such framing of meaning for action creates. Philosophical theory of epistemology can help us here. Through philosophical literature on epistemology I can discuss whether Invisible Children’s framing of meaning of action actually is knowledge and which epistemic implications such framing has. In conducting such a discussion I am respecting Invisible Children as potential knowledge makers, and investigation how we can understand its framing of

information as knowledge. Additionally the interaction with real world examples challenges epistemological theory to interact with complicated cases in which we can test whether we can use such theoretical frameworks to explain how we interact in everyday meaning making. Thus the theory of social movements, from the subject of International Development, and the philosophical theory of epistemology strengthen each other which enables me to make a grounded analysis of whether we can understand the information framing in the Kony2012 campaign as knowledge.

However, before going deeper into this discussion I will present a historic overview of the history of Uganda which aim is to show the historical context on which the Kony2012 campaign is engaging.

### **1.1 The Ugandan political history**

Uganda gained independence on 9 October 1962. The first election was held on 1 March 1961, and Benedicto Kiwanuka of the Democratic Party became the first prime minister. Since its independence, Uganda has suffered from continuous cycles of armed conflicts between the different governments and rebellions trying to overthrow them. In particular, the rebel group Lord Resistance Army (LRA) with their spiritual leader, Joseph Kony, revolted against President Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Army (NRA), due to the government's political exclusion of his northern ethnic group, the Acholi population (Branch 2010).

The LRA arose as a response to two political crises in Acholi society. These crises were embedded in the political history of Uganda, where ethnic politics had a central role. When the NRA took power in 1986, it led to both an internal and national crisis for the Acholi population. The internal crisis appeared as a consequence of a breakdown of authority internally in Acholi society. The external, national crisis was brought about by the destruction of Acholi representation in Uganda's national political society (Branch 2010:25). Each post-1986 Acholi rebel group, the UNDP, the Holy Spirit Movement, and the LRA appeared as a response to these crises, and each tried to create internal order in Acholi society by building a resistance against the external enemy, the NRA.

During Milton Obote first presidency (1966 to 1971), he brought significant numbers of northern Ugandans into the central state, both through the civil service and the military. This created a north-south cleavage in national politics which eventually provided the basis for a southern political identity that was central to the NRA rebellion. Idi Amin, with his coup in 1971, declared an end to ethnic favouritism towards the northerners and purged the military and the national civil service of northern political elites. When Obote returned to the presidency in 1980, he reinstated Acholi and Langi people in the military but otherwise created no political rehabilitation of the Acholi middle class (Branch 2010:28-30).

The NRA emerged as a rebellion against what the southerners saw as a northern military dictatorship. The Acholi population ended up bearing the brunt of the anti-northern sentiment because of their disproportionately large presence in the armed forces. In 1986, the NRA took Kampala and sent the remaining Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) troops fleeing north (Branch 2010:31). The Acholi elders saw the flood of thousands of undisciplined armed young Acholi men as a significant threat to their authority, thus the Acholi population's fragile internal order was thrown into crisis. When the NRA soldiers arrived in Acholiland, they fundamentally misinterpreted the situation. They saw their enemy in ethnic terms and the Acholi as the consummate northern tribe and presumed that there automatically would be a bond between the rural Acholi population and the UNLA. Even after easily occupying Acholiland, the NRA continued treating it as enemy territory. Politically, this meant that the NRA excluded the Acholi population from national power, undermining the possibility of re-establishing legitimate state authority (Branch 2010:33). Even though Museveni claimed that there was complete peace in Acholiland from March 1986 onwards, organisations like Amnesty International reported abuse and human rights violations, and by August 1986, it became evident that the Acholi population was subject to a violent military occupation by their own state (Branch 2010:34).

### **The rebel groups**

As a response to the violence against the Acholi population, several ex-UNLA reorganised as a rebel group, the UPDA. Faced with a common enemy, the Acholi elders and the UPDA were able to come together and stabilize the internal order around a shared Acholi identity (Branch 2010:34). The UPDA was soon able to gain significant support among the civilian population, and in August 1986, it attacked the Gulu district and had the intention of using it as a base to retake Kampala. The NRA counter-insurgency was so brutal that the UPDA was no longer able to provide the adequate protection to the population. The UPDA held together until the beginning of 1987 when it began to splinter (Branch 2010:35). As the UPDA failed to resolve the external national crisis, the internal crisis erupted again, and a new rebel group emerged to try to assert legitimate authority over the population (Branch 2010:36).

The new rebel group was led by the female Acholi spiritual medium, Alice Auma, known as Lakwena or 'Messenger'. Like the UPDA, Lakwena attempted to resolve the internal crisis by asserting her legitimate authority over the Acholi society and rallying the people against a common enemy, the NRA. Lakwena began mobilizing through a discourse of spiritual cleansing within Acholiland. She drew on a long-standing alternative tradition of Acholi spirituality that contested the claims to authority of the Acholi elders (Branch 2010:36). Lakwena claimed to be able to cleanse the impure in the Acholi population, re-establish internal order, and combat the NRA. In

July 1987, the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) began moving east and south. The HSM was able to find regional support and recruited heavily in areas where the NRA's arrival had been interpreted as an occupation rather than liberation. But as the HSM crossed into Bantu area, just a few dozen kilometres from Kampala, the movement was seen as an invading northern army, and within a couple of weeks the HSM had disintegrated (Branch 2010:37).

After Lakwena left Acholiland, the fractions of the HSM and UPDA terrorised each other's suspected civilian supporters. It was from this environment that Joseph Kony and his Lord Resistance Army (LRA) emerged. Although Kony was able to gain some support, he was generally confronted with a population unwilling to support continued violence. As a result, Kony had to rely on increased violence against civilians for his group's material and social survival (Branch 2010:38). Like Lakwena, Kony proposed cleansing of an internal enemy, but in Kony's conception, it was the political corruption of the administrative apparatus of the NRA embodied in the Acholi society that needed to be cleansed (Branch 2010:40). Kony understood Acholi identity as being LRA supporter, and thereby framed a difference between supporters of the government and genuine Acholi identity. He dismissed the power of the elders or any other authority to determine the bounds of the Acholi identity and claimed that it was only the LRA who would make this division in the Acholi community. Thus what might have appeared from LRA's perspective to be a reasonable purifying strategy, appeared from the Acholi civilians' perspective, to be an unpredictable, vicious reign of violence. The LRA's ideas of who represented the impure Acholi were constantly in flux and had little to do with what the civilians understood to be government collaborators. This further entrenched the political crisis (Branch 2010:42). The LRA also became associated with forced recruitments or abductions, often of children, and over the years thousand were incorporated into the movement in this way. Additionally, some were forced to perform atrocities such as mutilating or killing relatives as part of their initiation (Allen&Vlassenroot 2010:11).

The Ugandan government's response to the LRA violence has shifted back and forth between peace negotiations and military offensives. A four-month military operation "Operation North" was mounted in 1991, but the LRA counter-insurgency was even more violent, and hundreds of people were maimed or killed. In 1994, Betty Bigombe, the Minister of State for Pacification of Northern Uganda, managed to engage the LRA in peace talks by walking into the bush without protection. Over the course of four meetings with Kony, she arranged an uneasy ceasefire, and it looked as though there was the prospect of a peace agreement. However, President Museveni was not very enthusiastic, and in February 1994, he issued an ultimatum to the LRA that collapsed the negotiations and the killings resumed (Allen&Vlassenroot 2010:11). Museveni claimed that he had received military intelligence showing that the LRA were only involved in the peace negotiations to

rebuild their military capacity. According to Allen and Vlassenroot (2012), this might have been true, but the war in northern Uganda also had certain political advantages for Museveni; keeping his power, and justifying his huge military budget. Additionally, the horrific violence and weird spirituality of the LRA allowed the government to portray the north as a barbaric periphery (Allen&Vlassenroot 2010:12). The government's military insurgency operations continued with operation Iron Fist in 2002 and Operation Lightning Thunder in December 2008. Another peace negotiation was initiated in Juba in 2006 to 2008, but collapsed late November 2008. The LRA left Uganda in 2006 and is now operating in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic.

In 2003, Museveni was persuaded to refer the situation to the newly established International Criminal Court (ICC). It was the ICC's first big case, and it spurred the debate on how the ICC was going to handle the allegations of serious crimes carried out by Ugandans government and the LRA (Allen&Vlassenroot 2010:16). It was at that time that the founders of Invisible Children, Jason Russell, Laren Poole and Bobby Bailey were first confronted with the war in Uganda by stumbling upon the night commuters in Gulu in their travels from South Sudan. This meeting was the beginning of Invisible Children and their fight to make the children of northern Uganda visible.

## **1.2 Research area**

Invisible Children's aim is to support the children affected by LRA atrocities by raising awareness to, and advocating their cause. Since 2005, Invisible Children has hosted 13,809 film screenings and held 7 international events and campaigns to propagate its media, raise awareness, and generate funds (InvisibleChildren/nationaltour 2013)<sup>1</sup>. Invisible Children has been extremely successful in motivating young Americans to engage in this global social issue. Since its inception in 2003, Invisible Children has mobilized tens of thousands of young people, mainly in North America, and has raised tens of millions of dollars (Finnegan 2011:5). Invisible Children distributes its films, creates awareness and raises funds through groups of young members who host local events, share Invisible Children's film, and participate in awareness raising campaigns and advocacy events.

Looking closer at Invisible Children, then, how can we understand its success in motivating so many young people to participate in its advocacy? And how are Invisible Children creating awareness and advocacy?

Invisible Children launched the Kony2012 campaign in March 2012, releasing the 30 minutes long Kony2012 film on YouTube and Vimeo on 5 March 2012. The film spread instantly and quickly

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<sup>1</sup> <http://invisiblechildren.com/program/national-tour/> d.05.11.2013

became one of the most viewed films in history with more than 100 million views in just a week, and it created unprecedented amounts of attention in just a few days. The video describes how Kony and his rebel group the LRA have been abducting children in Uganda for the past 26 years. The campaign's purpose was to raise global awareness about Kony by making him famous, and thereby bringing him to justice before the end of 2012 (Invisible Children 2012)<sup>2</sup>.

Immediately following the release and success, the campaign received heavy criticism: Critics accused the young members of engaging in *slacktivism*<sup>3</sup>, only practicing easy meaningless form of "social action". Critics also argued that *the military intervention* Invisible Children is advocating for as the solution to stop Kony, will have serious consequences for the northern Ugandans. It has been criticised for irresponsible use of *economic resources*, as it spend less than a third of the money it has raised directly on the Ugandan development programmes. Lastly critics have stated that Invisible Children is *oversimplifying the conflict*, framing it as ahistorical, and that it gives *no agency to the Ugandans* and the local organisations working in the area.

### **1.2.1 Meaning-making**

As showed in the introduction, Invisible Children has been successful in framing meaning making for action in its Kony2012 campaign. According to Keck and Sikkink we can understand this information framing as essential for social movements, as it binds them together. Social movements generate attention through creative use of media and information from alternative sources, providing not only facts, but also testimonies and personal stories from the people whose lives have been affected (Keck&Sikkink 1998:19).

Framing meaning for action is recognised as an important facet of social movements, and social movements often construct frames of meaning to organize experiences and guide action through what is known as *collective action frames*. According to Snow and Benford (1992, 2000), collective action frames are understood as an interpretive function where social movements, such as Invisible Children, simplify and condense the "world out there" by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action within one's present or past environment with the intention of mobilizing potential members. Thus, collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimize the activities and campaigns of social movements (Benford&Snow 2000:614, 1992:137).

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4MnpzG5Sqc> d.05.11.2013

<sup>3</sup> The term slacktivism is derived from a fusion between *slackter* and *activism*, and is defined as: "actions performed via the Internet in support of a political or social cause but regarded as requiring little time or involvement, e.g. signing an online petition or joining a campaign on a social media website."

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/slacktivism> d.03.11.2013

At the root of making meaning is the proposition that humans constantly seek to understand the world around them, and that the imposition of meaning on the world is a goal in itself. “Meaning includes understandings of right and wrong, cognitive understandings of true and false, perceptual understandings of like and unlike, social understanding of identity and difference etc.” (Kurzmann 2008:5). Philosophically speaking, these are questions of epistemology and knowledge.

Defined narrowly, epistemology is the study of knowledge and justified belief. Epistemology is concerned with questions such as: What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge? What are its sources? What is its structure, and what are its limits? Understood more broadly, epistemology is about the creation and dissemination of knowledge in particular areas of inquiry (Steup 2005:1).

How does Invisible Children frame meaning for action? And can we assign trust and credibility to the framing of information in the Kony2012 campaign, and thereby understand it as knowledge?

### **1.2.2 Responsibility**

Invisible Children calls attention to issues by using language that dramatizes and draws attention to its concerns. As the purpose of campaigning is persuading and stimulating people to act, social movements interpret facts and testimony, usually framing issues simply in terms of right and wrong (Keck&Sikkink 1998:19-20). The process in which the information is chosen normally involves several layers of prior translation and selection to fit the collective action frame and as a consequence such interpretations can sometimes lead to local informants losing control over their stories (Keck&Sikkink 1998:20).

Invisible Children’s framing of information to call attention to the issue of northern Uganda, involves several layers of prior translation of personal testimonies and facts, which raise important questions of responsibility. Given the criticism of the lack of Ugandan agency and of the historic oversimplification, we can ask which implications this kind of framing of meaning for action have?

According to David Miller (2007) we have a remedial responsibility to aid those in need, and we can understand Invisible Children’s Kony2012 campaign as trying to remedy the situation for the northern Ugandans by bringing justice to Kony. However, we also have a responsibility for the foreseeable outcomes of our actions and epistemic decisions, thus we would expect Invisible Children to have an outcome responsibility for the implications of its framing of meaning for action. But how can we understand this responsibility? And in which way can we hold Invisible Children responsible?

### **1.3 Main research question**

How can Invisible Children's success in motivating young people, and in framing meaning for action be explained? How can this framing of meaning for action be understood as knowledge? And in which ways can Invisible Children be held responsible for the implications of such framing?

#### **1.3.1 Theoretical reflections**

As stated in the introduction, this thesis examines the Kony2012 campaign from the perspective of both International Development Studies and Philosophy. In this section I will reflect on the theoretical choices I have made within both subjects, and discuss how the two subjects theoretical frameworks can support each other in the analysis during the thesis, and how taken together the two subjects can answer the main research question.

#### **Theory from International Development Studies**

The choice of case is chosen from within the subject of International Development Studies, as this subject focus on a specific thematic within social science. I start the thesis by examine how Invisible Children motivates its members to action in Chapter 3. To make this examination I will analyse how Invisible Children creates collectives identities and shared emotions among its members, this within social movement theory. Specifically I have chosen to build this theoretical framework on Sidney Tarrow (2011) *Power in movements*. This analysis enables me to explain how Invisible Children has been so successful in motivating young people to act, and which form of activism and advocacy these members make possible.

This naturally leads to an analysis of how Invisible Children frame meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign in Chapter 4. Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action is closely linked to how Invisible Children frame information in the campaign to get its members to act. This analysis is done within the theory of collective actions frames, specifically Snow and Benford's (1992, 2000) theory of collective action frames through the components: 1) diagnostic framing; assigning blame and responsibility, 2) prognostic framing; the proposed solutions, and 3) motivational frame; call to action. The analysis will also include a discussion of the key critiques relevant for this thesis; the oversimplification of the history of Uganda, and the missing Ugandan agency.

These two analyses are primarily done within the subject of International Development Studies, however, they raise interesting philosophical questions of knowledge and responsibility.

## Theory from Philosophy

Through the analysis of how Invisible Children frames meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign, and what implications such framing brings we can question whether and how such framing can be understood as knowledge, this is done in Chapter 5.

To analyse whether and how we can understand the framing of meaning for action as knowledge, I analyse whether we can understand Invisible Children as epistemic trustworthy agents, this through Nancy Daukas (2006) *Epistemic Trust and Social Location*. The argument is that if we can assign trust to Invisible Children's epistemic assessments in the Kony2012 campaign, we can understand this information as knowledge, or at least as justified beliefs. Additionally, through Miranda Fricker's (2011) *Epistemic injustice*, I discuss whether the missing voice of the northern Ugandan in the Kony2012 campaign is an expression of epistemic injustice towards the northern Ugandans.

The analysis is mainly done within the philosophical framework of feminist virtue epistemology. However, the analysis is conducted by relying on the findings from the previous chapters, and will expand the understanding of how social movements framing of meaning for action is understandable as knowledge, and which implications such framings brings.

## Integration of the theories

In chapter 3, 4 and 5, I have analysed and discussed how Invisible Children frame meaning for action in its Kony2012 campaign, which implications this framing bring, and how we can understand this framing as knowledge. The thesis final discussion, Chapter 6, discusses in which way we can hold Invisible Children responsible for the implications its framing of meaning of action has for the northern Ugandans. The theoretical framework built upon philosophical theory of responsibility, specifically through David Miller (2007) *National responsibility and Global Justice* and Lorraine Code (1987) *Epistemic responsibility*, however, the theoretical framework is an integration of all the previous findings and theories.

In section 1.2.2 I argued, through David Miller, that we have a remedial responsibility to help does in need, thus Invisible Children is aiming to fulfil its remedial responsibility by remedying the situation for the northern Ugandans. This remedial responsibility is closely linked with Invisible Children's members' shared emotions, analysed in Chapter 3, and the collective action frame's diagnostic and motivational framing, analysed in Chapter 4. Thus we can understand Invisible Children's punctuating of specific shared emotions and motivational values as aiming at getting its

members to feel a remedial responsibility to aid the Ugandans. This is underlined with how Invisible Children assign blame and responsibility in its diagnostic framing.

In addition to remedial responsibility, we also have a responsibility for the foreseeable outcome of our actions. I link this outcome responsibility with epistemic responsibility in that I argue that we have an outcome responsibility for the foreseeable outcome of both our actions *and* our epistemic decisions. This is mainly discussed based on Invisible Children's epistemic character, and stereotypical understanding found in Chapter 5.

Lastly I discuss whether Invisible Children is morally to blame for its framing of meaning for action by evaluating whether Invisible Children is preventing more harm than good in its framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012. In this discussion I integrate the findings from Chapter 4 and 5, and relate it to general International Development literature on development campaigns.

The discussions in Chapter 6 integrate both International Development Studies and Philosophical theories into an overall frame on which I can discuss whether Invisible Children is epistemic, outcome and remedial responsible for the implications of its framing of meaning for action.

### **1.3.2 Composition of the thesis**

In this section I will give a short description of the composition of the thesis. This is done to give an overview of each chapter, to highlight the thread of consistency, and show how I answer the main research question.

1. The **Introduction** serves to introduce the focus and aim of this thesis by introducing the research area and the main research question. 2. The **Methods** seek to explain and reflect on the methodological choices taken in the thesis. Chapter 3. **Invisible Children** serves as an explanatory chapter to make the foundation to answer the first part of the first question in the main research question: *How can Invisible Children's success in motivating young people be explained?* The chapter give a rich introduction to Invisible Children, analysed through social movement theory. Chapter 4. **Kony2012** analyse how Invisible Children frame meaning for action in the Kony2012 which will answer the second part of main research question's first question: *How can Invisible Children's framing meaning for action be explained?* Simultaneous with this analysis I will discuss the framing's implications, through which we will reach a more profound understanding these. This will engender questions of epistemology and responsibility. Chapter 5. **Epistemology** discusses the main research question's second question, '*How can the framing of information be understood as knowledge?*' The question is analysed by discussion whether we can assign trust to Invisible Children as an epistemic agent. The analysis will also bring us to a

discussion of the framings implications, and an understanding of the missing Ugandan agency in the campaign. Chapter 6. **Responsibility** will discuss the main research question's last question: *In which way can Invisible Children be held responsible for the implication of such framings?* This discussion serves to bring the analysis to a more general level, by discussion how Invisible Children can be held outcome, remedial and epistemic responsible for the implications of the framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign. 7. The **Conclusion** will compile the conclusions from the other chapters and thereby answer the main research question.

## **2. Methods**

This chapter seeks to explain and reflect on my methodological choices throughout the thesis. I will argue for the choice of case, the validity of the thesis as a case study, my theoretical and empirical choices, and the delimitations I have made. First, I will explain my personal interest, preconceptions and assumptions that may have affected the approach to the analysis.

### **2.1 Personal interest, preconceptions and assumptions**

When I first watched the Kony2012 video, I was left with a feeling of ambivalence - I was very moved watching the film, both hearing and seeing the terrible pictures and being introduced to a conflict I did not know much about. I found the film very effective in making me feel that I had an obligation to help the war-affected population of Uganda. However, I could not help feeling a kind of disgust of the methods Invisible Children used in their storytelling; the general pictures, the simple historical information, and the storytellers showing themselves as centre of the story. As a student of International Development and Philosophy, I naturally had some preconceptions and assumptions of the implications that the film might bring. First of all, I knew that the conflict in Uganda was more complex than the storyline of the film showed. Second, I had an idea of the ethical and epistemic implications of framing meaning for action. Third, I had an expectation of the high level of responsibility one needs to have in conducting awareness campaigns on behalf of others who have relatively less power.

Nonetheless, I was fascinated by Invisible Children's ability to motivate so many young people and being so loud in its awareness campaigns. I wanted to give Invisible Children the benefit of the doubt by respecting it as a meaning maker for action, and make an investigation of it without letting my negative preconceptions influence the analysis.

### **2.2 Case**

In this section, I will discuss the justifications of the choice of case. Additionally, I will describe and argue the validity of this thesis case study of Invisible Children and its Kony2012 campaign.

My fascination and ambivalence with the Invisible Children and the Kony2012 campaign was the first reason for taking interest in this exact case. Additionally, the Kony2012 campaign is chosen on the grounds of its new, innovative way of campaigning, which has proved to be very successful. With the increasing use of social media, I think we will see much more of such campaigning in the future. As an example, Action Aid Denmark advocated in its Taxpower campaign its members to

make a media-storm on Facebook on 21 October 2013. Like Invisible Children, it wanted its members to share a film on Facebook, however, only at a specific time.

The case of Invisible Children is not chosen to discuss these social platforms' communicative influence but to discuss how social movements can frame meaning for action on such platforms, whether such framing is understandable as knowledge, and in which ways a social movement like Invisible Children can be held responsible for the implication of such framings. Invisible Children is an interesting case because of the tension between being so successful in its Kony2012 advocacy campaign, and in motivating so many young people to act, while simultaneously receiving such heavy criticism for its methods of framing meaning for action.

I have chosen to conduct a case study because social movements constitute fast-moving, changing targets (Dahlgren 2004:xvi), where the information assessed and analysed is contemporary and changes with the social movement's evolvement. I will give detailed introductions to both Invisible Children and the Kony2012 campaign in chapter 3 and 4, which is why I do not discuss them further here.

### **2.2.1 Validity**

In this section, I discuss the validity of my choice of case in relation to the thesis' empirical and theoretical foundation. I use Robert Yin's (1989) four criteria for assessing the quality and validity of the case study: 1) Constructed validity, 2) Internal validity, 3) External validity, and 4) Reliability (Yin 1989:40-41).

To ensure the *constructed validity* of the thesis, I use multiple sources of empirical data to justify my empirical assumptions. First and foremost, I use Invisible Children's own website which contains blog posts, statements, facts about the movement's work, and all its films. Subsequently, I rely on Finnegan's empirical findings in the fieldwork for her dissertation. I compare this information with other articles and investigations focused on Invisible Children and the Kony2012 campaign. This establishes a chain of evidence where I compare the different empirical findings and hold it together with relevant explanatory theories.

To insure *internal validity*, I give rich explanations of the history of Invisible Children, the Kony2012 campaign, and the critiques towards it. When rival evidence or arguments occur, I demonstrate them. However, as the thesis focuses on Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action within the Kony2012 campaign, I will limit my focus to only include aspects relevant to this case. The constructed and internal validity also serve to ensure *reliability* in the thesis. The chain

of evidences insures that the empirical information is valid, and internal validity insures that the reader can follow my analytical steps.

According to Yin, ensuring *external validity* has been a major barrier for case studies as critics have stated that single cases offer a poor basis for generalizing (Yin 1988:43). However, it is not the intent of this thesis to generalise the findings of the investigations of Invisible Children and the Kony2012 campaign. Social movement theory and studies function within the contemporary study where social movements evolve, take interest in different issues, and use different tactics in their framing of meaning for action, thus no specific case study on a social movement's campaign is written in generalising terms. Likewise, one will not find concrete overall conclusions or checklists for making good development campaigns in this thesis. However, I use different normative theory of moral responsibility and epistemology throughout the investigation, thus even though the thesis' findings are context specific, I will argue that the conclusion could serve as useful inspiration for others working with campaigning on development issues.

The following section will include a more detailed discussion of the choice of empirical data, theory and the delimitations which also serve to ensure the validity and reliability in the thesis.

### **2.3 Choice of empirical data**

In this section I will explain my choices of empirical data. Most of Invisible Children's advocacy on the Kony2012 campaign, and the criticism towards it has taken place on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter and on personal blogs. Most of the thesis' empirical data is found through these new communication platforms, thus the empirical work in the thesis is based on an investigation of the nature of the debate on these platforms which has required making an overview of the debating blogs. This work entails comparing the opinions to one another, and creating a general picture of the critiques towards Kony2012 and the responses from Invisible Children.

The thesis' *primary empirical data* is Invisible Children's media and website which contains blog posts, statements, and facts about the movement's work as well as all its films. Invisible Children uses film and media as its main communication outlet, where it makes presentations of the movement, its campaigns and events. Additionally, Invisible Children answers to critique and make general statements through its films, thus discussing Invisible Children's advocacy and response to critiques is done by analysing its films and media. This is mainly presented in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

The thesis' *secondary empirical data* mostly rely on blogs from respected academics focussing on development problematics in east and central Africa such as Alex de Waal, Mahmood Mandani, and Sverker Finnström. I believe that they have the fundamental empirical and theoretical understanding to analyse and discuss Invisible Children's advocacy. Additional blog posts have been used to ensure an expanded view and overall representation of the debate concerning Invisible Children's advocacy. This work is mostly presented in Chapter 4 where I discuss the critiques and implications of the framing of meaning for action. This discussion will be central to the epistemic analysis in Chapter 5 and the discussion of responsibility in Chapter 6. To elaborate and expand on this empirical data, I have drawn on Amy Finnegan's (2011) dissertation *Beyond Victimhood: Narratives of Social Change from and for Northern Uganda*. Finnegan's work has a central role in analysing the members' collective identity and feelings in Chapter 3 and the northern Ugandan activists' opinion of Invisible Children in Chapter 4.

## **2.4 Choice of theory**

In this section, I will explain and argue for the theoretical choices I have made in the thesis in relation to other theoretical aspects on the area. Generally, I have focused my theoretical choices so they interact with the thesis' empirical literature either explaining or contesting it.

### **2.4.1 Theory from International Development Studies**

As stated in the introduction Chapter 3 and 4 are mainly conducted within the subject of International Development Studies, where I analyse Invisible Children's: 1) collective identity and shared emotions through social movement theory, and 2) collective action frame through which it frame meaning for action.

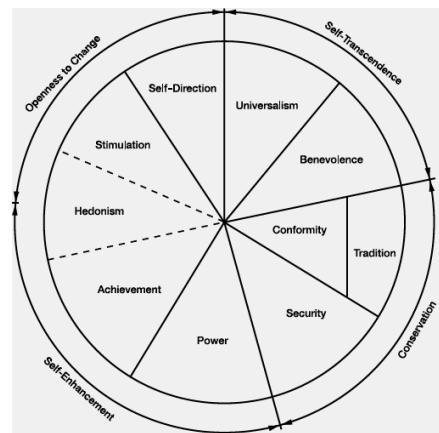
To analyse Invisible Children's collective identity and shared emotions in Chapter 3, I have used Sidney Tarrow (2011) *Power in Movements*. I have chosen to build my analysis primarily on Tarrow because she is a leading expert within social movement theory and contentious politics. Tarrow focuses her work both on the internal and external components where the internal focus on construction of collective identity and feelings, and the externally focus on contemporary contentious protest through campaigning and on protests which take different forms. Additionally, Tarrow includes thoughts from other leading social movements' theorists such as Snow and Benford on whom the analysis in Chapter 4 is focused thus bringing coherence between the theoretical frameworks.

To analyse Invisible Children's collective action frame in Chapter 4, I have chosen to focus on Snow and Benford's (1992, 2000) work on the subject, as they have been the most influential among

American scholars which is why most literature on collective action frames builds on their work (Mueller 1992:13). I use Snow and Benford's theoretical concept of "core framing tasks": diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing as the main structure to analyse how Invisible Children frames meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign. Within each component, I draw on additional theory to elaborate and expand the analysis.

In diagnostic framing, I include on Keck and Sikkink's (1998) *Transnational Advocacy Network* to illustrate how Invisible Children frame information. Keck and Sikkink define transnational advocacy networks as, "organized to promote causes, principled ideas, and norms, and they often involve individuals advocating policy changes that cannot be easily linked to rationalist understanding of their "interests'" (Keck&Sikkink 1998:8-9). Even though one can make a valid argument for analysing Invisible Children as a transnational advocacy network, I am not interested in conducting this analysis. Though interesting, I do not find it relevant for answering the thesis' main research question. The theory is therefore only used to analyse Invisible Children's framing of information as a tactic to frame meaning for action.

In motivational framing, I draw on Holmes et al's (2011) and Darnton and Kirk's (2011) *Motivational Value System* to analyse which values Invisible Children propagates to motivate its members to action. This framework is based upon Swartz's values circumplex which is comprised of ten value types. According to Darnton and Kirk, how our social life is framed has particular influence on the balance of values we hold (Darnton&Kirk 2011:41). Social movements frame their campaign through specific values which generate specific attitudes towards development campaigns. According to Darnton and Kirk, the values have dynamic interrelations, where compatible values appear adjacent, and conflicting values appear opposite to one another. If the values do not correlate, they appear orthogonally to one another at right angles (Darnton&Kirk 2011:42). However, because I find this argumentation for use of values in development campaigning somewhat problematic, I will not use this distinction in the analysis. The motivational value system is only used to analyse which values Invisible Children propagates to motivate its members to actions.



Social movements are a 'fuzzy' and 'fluid' phenomena often without clear boundaries, as van de Donk et al (2004) describe it. Social movements may expand or shrink considerably over a short period of time and may quickly change their form, strategy, tactics, and even their goals, thus social movements are moving targets which make them difficult to observe (van de Donk et al 2004:3).

Most theory on social movement is therefore descriptive and explanatory focussing on how social movements frame meaning for action or create collective identities. The theories do not focus on which implications such framings bring or what kind of responsibility social movements have for these. However, philosophical theories of epistemology and responsibility can integrate these aspects in the analyses which enables me to discuss Invisible Children's framing against normative ideals of responsibility and virtues of good epistemic behaviour.

### **2.4.2 Theory from philosophy**

As stated in the introduction the analyses and discussion in Chapter 5 and 6 are conducted within a philosophical theoretical framework. The theories enables me to discuss whether Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action is understandable as knowledge, and how we can hold Invisible Children responsible for the implications of its framing.

To analyse whether Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action can be understood as knowledge, I draw on feminist virtue epistemological authors. These epistemological theorists focus on identifying ways in which dominant conceptions and practices of knowledge disadvantage oppressed groups. I find this angle interesting and relevant as I not only seek to understand whether the framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign is knowledge but also which epistemic implication such conception of knowledge may have on the northern Ugandans. Feminist virtue epistemology enables me to analyse these aspects. More specifically, I have chosen to focus on Nancy Daukas (2006) *Epistemic Trust and Social Location* and Miranda Fricker (2011) *Epistemic Injustice*. Through Daukas' focus on trustworthiness, I analyse whether we can assign trust to Invisible Children epistemic assessments of the war in Uganda, and thereby analyse whether its framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign is knowledge. Through Fricker's theoretical framework of unreliable stereotypical prejudice that can lead to epistemic injustice, I can analyse which stereotypical understandings Invisible Children holds towards the northern Ugandans. This analysis can explain the missing Ugandan agency in the campaign which is essential in understanding the implications of Invisible Children's framing.

To discuss whether and how we can hold Invisible Children responsible for its framing of meaning for action in Chapter 6, I use David Miller (2007) *National Responsibility and Global Justice* and Lorraine Code (1987) *Epistemic Responsibility*. Miller's theory of responsibility is an attempt to theorize global justice. One of his main questions is what responsibility we have to aid the world's poor. An interesting element, and the main part of my choice of the theory, is Miller's focus on agency and responsibility. Miller complains that many theorists of global egalitarian distributive justice treat beneficiaries only as victims. According to Miller, an acceptable theory of

responsibility has to have the right balance between two aspects of the human condition: both regarding human beings as vulnerable and needy and as choosing responsible agents.

Miller's distinction enables me to analyse which implications Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action have for the northern Ugandans. Additionally, it allows me to discuss what kind of responsibility Invisible Children takes upon itself when trying to remedy the situation in Uganda. I will integrate Lorraine Code's (1987) theory of *Epistemic Responsibility* as an additional component of responsibility to discuss whether Invisible Children is epistemically responsible in its framing of information. This discussion functions to integrate the epistemic analysis of knowledge into the discussion of responsibility.

## **2.4 Delimitations**

In this section, I will discuss the delimitations of the thesis by discussing which other aspects could have been interesting to integrate and why I have chosen not to.

I have chosen not to conduct fieldwork or qualitative inquiries. This choice is based on the focus of my investigation and the scope of fieldwork had I chosen to conduct one. By focusing on "framing meaning for action", it is essential to understand the nature of the debate about Invisible Children and its advocacy in the Kony2012 campaign. This debate has mainly been played out on social media platforms which is why I wanted to prioritise my focus on understanding of the nature of the debate on these platforms. Additionally, a potential fieldwork study would not have been feasible within this thesis' timeframe, because getting an overall picture of the implications of Invisible Children's framing, would include conducting fieldwork in northern Ugandan, interaction with people who have engaged with Invisible Children and/or seen the Kony2012 video, as well as with Invisible Children's members in the US.

In my analysis of Invisible Children as a social movement, I have chosen not to focus on the discussion of civil society, global civil society and the related discussion of state sovereignty. Even though this discussion would have been interesting and could have helped to explain how and why a social movement such as Invisible Children can push for power on the international stage, I will argue that this focus would have disrupted the thread of consistency in the thesis. This is also why I have chosen not to discuss Invisible Children as a transnational advocacy network, as this discussion is closely linked to the understanding of global civil society and state sovereignty.

### 3. Invisible Children

In this chapter, I will analyse how Invisible Children create collective identity and shared emotions through Sidney Tarrow (2011) *Power in Movements*. This is done to answer the first part of the first question in the main research question: *How can Invisible Children's success in motivating young people be explained?*

First, I will present a historical overview of Invisible Children's development, then I will present a theoretical framework of social movements, and lastly I will use this framework to analyse how Invisible Children motivates action by creating collective identities and shared emotions, and which form of activism this enables.

#### 3.1 The history of Invisible Children

Invisible Children is a media-based, storytelling, non-profit organisation using the Internet's social media platforms for political activism and raising awareness. It was registered in 2004, and its mission is “to use film, creativity, and social action to end the use of child soldiers in Joseph Kony’s rebel war and restore Northern Uganda to peace and prosperity” (Finnegan 2011:56, Swartz 2012:1).

In 2003, the co-founders, three young Americans, Jason Russell, Bobby Bailey, and Laren Poole, travelled by themselves to Africa in search for ‘their story’ about which to make a documentary. Travelling through Uganda, on their way back from Sudan, they stumbled upon the nightly commute of young children in Gulu, northern Uganda and thereby ‘discovered’ the LRA, and Joseph Kony. To this, the movie’s narrator Jason Russell states: “needless to say, we found your story.” (Invisible Children 2004:12,44)<sup>4</sup>. They themselves shot and directed the documentary *Invisible Children: The Rough Cut*<sup>5</sup> on this voyage. The documentary is told in reality-style confessional, starting by portraying their initial boredom and general naiveté by depicting the friends killing a snake and vomiting, pictures Swartz refers to as “details worthy of the stunt-oriented reality show Jackass.” (Swartz 2012:5). In learning about the night commuters’ plight, children who are forced to leave their homes to sleep safely in Gulu town from fear of being abducted by the LRA<sup>6</sup>, the documentary changed to a more serious picturing. When they returned home, their aim became to expose what they had witnessed in Uganda by showing their documentary in high schools, colleges, and churches throughout the US (Invisible Children 2004).

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<sup>4</sup> <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/invisible-children/> d.22.08.2013

<sup>5</sup> The film both has a 35minute and a one-hour version. References to the movie are based on the one-hour version.

<sup>6</sup> The night commute is a term used to describe the children commuting from their home, often in the displacement camps to Gulu each night.

In the beginning, the movement's main purpose was to create awareness of the crimes conducted by the LRA in east and central Africa (Invisible Children 2004). According to an interview conducted by Finnegan with a staff member of the Invisible Children, the movement “(...) really formed as a response to a need to channel energy and resources garnered from the documentary” (Finnegan 2011:57). As the movement matured it also began mobilizing to put an end to the LRA's atrocities by lobbying the US government to take military action in the central region of Africa and to step up their development aid to Uganda. The movement has grown immensely over the last couple of years in terms of staff, both locally in the US and in Uganda, now with a total of 173 employees (66 in the US department) (InvisibleChildren/staff 2013)<sup>7</sup>.

Invisible Children is split into two parts – a US department and one in Uganda. The two almost function as two separate organisations. The US department refers to itself as a ‘movement’ and focuses on fundraising, awareness, advocacy campaigns, and legislative change through the components media and mobilisation. The department in Uganda functions as an aid-driven NGO that focuses on implementing livelihood and educational programmes (InvisibleChildren/work 2013)<sup>8</sup>. Finnegan states: “I think in the United States is where they really play an activist role (...) in Uganda they are sort of an organisation” she adds “In Uganda they don't play an activist role, they play a development role” (Golden 19.03.2012:8,06, 24,29)<sup>9</sup>. This thesis will focus on the work of the US department, but I will nonetheless give a short presentation of Invisible Children's work in Uganda to get an overall understanding of its work.

Invisible Children Uganda consists of two components, protection and recovery. The protection initiatives include: 1) Protecting the local community from LRA attacks, including an early warning system radio network which is a series of high frequency radios that collects information of the current location of the LRA and posts it on the digital platform, the LRA crisis tracker. 2) Encouraging the LRA to defect peacefully through a) defection fliers planted alongside known LRA routes in the bush, and distributed by airplanes flying over LRA areas, and b) through radio programs with “come home messaging” (InvisibleChildren/work 2013)<sup>10</sup>.

The recovery initiatives include eight programmes: 1) “Schools for schools” rebuild schools in northern Uganda and provides school material. 2) “Teacher exchange” strengthens the capacity of the teachers by exchanging with a teacher from the US. 3) “The Legacy school program” directly supports children by paying their school tuition; the programme includes mentors who work alongside the children functioning as a role model. 4) “Village savings & loan associations” brings

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<sup>7</sup> <http://invisiblechildren.com/about/our-team/> d.22.08.2013

<sup>8</sup> <http://invisiblechildren.com/our-model/> d.26.10.2013

<sup>9</sup> <http://thesocietypages.org/officehours/2012/03/19/amy-finnegan-on-uganda-and-kony-2012/> d.22.08.2013

<sup>10</sup> The information is found in the film “protection” on the Invisible Children website.

the context of a bank into the local community, where they can invest in themselves, take loans and share their profit. 5) “The Functional adult literacy program” teaches adults how to read and write to fill out forms and manage businesses. 6) “Water, sanitation & hygiene program” constructs boreholes with support from other partners. 7) “MEND” helps women of northern Uganda who are directly affected by the LRA to improve their tailoring skills, so they can earn an income from tailor work, and 8) “The Rehabilitation project” helps former LRA soldiers to cope with their trauma (InvisibleChildren/work 2013)<sup>11</sup>.

Invisible Children US operates as an awareness-creating social movement both soliciting for donations and selling merchandise to raise money for its cause. The movement’s work in the US primarily consists of creating awareness and promoting its cause by dispensing films on the Internet making nationwide and international tours presenting the videos in high schools, colleges etc. and conducting nationwide campaigns to lobby the US government (InvisibleChildren/work 2013)<sup>12</sup>.

Invisible Children distributes its films, creates awareness, and raises funds through a volunteer concept called *roadies*. Invisible Children runs two roadie tours a year; January to mid-May and August to mid-December, where roadies voluntarily travel around the US for four months facilitating screening of Invisible Children’s newest films and selling merchandise. The events are held at churches, schools, youth groups, concerts etc. The process of selecting roadies is highly competitive. To become a roadie, you need to submit an application that includes making and publishing a 3-5 minute YouTube video of yourself and your reasons for wanting to be a roadie. During the first five weeks, the roadies have intensive training and preparation at Invisible Children’s local office. They learn to speak in short, quotable chunks which makes it easier to spread Invisible Children’s message in a way that seems particularly effective for the college- and high school-aged audience who may have little if any prior exposure to the history of Uganda (Swartz 2012:12). After the training, the roadies are divided into teams of five; four Americans/internationals and one Ugandan, and go on local tours. Each day, they will show Invisible Children’s media and “speak to hundreds of students about global citizenship and the role that they can play in this larger issue” (InvisibleChildren/job 2013)<sup>13</sup>. The daily lives of the roadies are documented and circulated throughout the movement as videos, images, blog-posts and even TV series, thus to be a roadie is to be an embodied character of Invisible Children.

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<sup>11</sup> This information is found in the film “Recovery” available through Invisible Children’s website.

<sup>12</sup> The information is found in the film “Mobilization” available through Invisible Children’s website.

<sup>13</sup> <http://invisiblechildren.com/jobs/> d.22.08.2013

On these tours, it is possible to purchase DVD's of Invisible Children's nine major films, but Invisible Children does not explicitly use Creative Commons' licensing<sup>14</sup>. It practices and encourages the free exchange of its materials. Invisible Children states: "As we pass the torch to you, we ask you use the documentary and Invisible Children logo responsibly – only raise awareness and benefit Invisible Children, inc. We want everyone to have FREE access to "Invisible Children: Rough Cut." Be creative and make your screening unique. The only thing we insist is that you don't charge for admission" (Swartz 2012:12).

Invisible Children have conducted five major events. The first, called *Global Night Commute*, on 29 April 2006 had over 80,000 participants in 125 cities across the US. Its aim was to create awareness and solidarity with the night commuters in Gulu. The activists walked from their home and schools to the city centre and slept outside. During the sleepover, the participants wrote letters to former President Bush and their local congressmen urging them to take action towards ending the war in Uganda (InvisibleChildren/event 2013, Catalyst 2013)<sup>15</sup>. On 28 April 2007, the event *Displace Me* took place and another 68,000 people showed up in 15 different cities across the US. The event was a response to Uganda's Internally Displaced Person Camps. On 25 April 2009, *The Rescue* took place in nearly 100 cities, in nine countries, with an estimated attendance of 85,000 people. The Rescue campaign asked its attendees to "abduct" themselves for the abducted children in northern Uganda until they were publicly rescued by a media mogul. The rescuers included Oprah Winfrey, Kristen Bell, Sen, James Inhofe and Rep and John Lewis. The event '*25' and break the silence*' took place on April 25 2011 where 91,000 activists pledged to be silent for 25 hours to create awareness and an additionally 30,000 people fundraised. The participant's pledge of 25 hours of silence symbolised one hour for each year of the conflict's duration. The silence ended with 18 musical events across the US. The event *Cover The Night* took place on April 20 2012 where young people from around the world covered their cities with posters of Joseph Kony which symbolised bringing justice to Kony by making him famous. The most recent event took place on 17 November 2012 in Washington DC where more than 12,000 people registered to rally. The event took place at the same time as the Global Summit on the LRA where leaders from major international institutions and affected region met to discuss possible solutions to the crisis (InvisibleChildren/event 2013).

Invisible Children launched the Kony 2012 campaign in March 2012. The campaign was based on the Internet film of the same name. The aim was to make Kony famous to put further pressure on the US government to keep military advisers in east and central Africa (Invisible Children 2012).

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<sup>14</sup> A Creative Commons (CC) license is a public copyright licenses that enable the free distribution of an otherwise copyrighted work. <http://creativecommons.org/> d.04.11.2013.

<sup>15</sup><http://invisiblchildren.com/program/international-events/> & <http://catalystconference.com/read/invisible-children-global-night-commute/> d.22.08.2013

The video went viral and reached more than 40 million views in three days making it the fastest viewed film on YouTube to date. Invisible Children had its pre-existing network in place which initially helped spread the video<sup>16</sup>. Immediately following the release and the success of the campaign, criticism of the movement's activity and finances surfaced. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **3.2 Social movement theory**

In this section, I will give a short presentation of social movement theory mainly based on Sidney Tarrow's (2011) *Power in Movement*. This theoretical framework is used to analyse Invisible Children as a social movement which will give an understanding of its internal and external structure.

The US has a long history of social activism, both focusing on domestic concerns and lobbying on behalf of foreign policy issues. The activists interact with state as well as international institutions, and they work with non-state actors and across state borders (Budabin 2011:4). They are an important force in today's post-Cold war era (Kaldor 2003:79).

Non-state actors are defined as, "actors that are not (representatives of) states, yet that operate at the international level and that are potentially relevant to international relations" (Budabin 2011:30). This includes multinational corporations (MNC's), non-governmental organizations (NGO's), social movements, trade unions, church and religious networks, criminal networks, and terrorist groups (Budabin 2011:30).

In this section, I will mainly present a theoretical foundation for social movements, and when necessary, I will illustrate the distinctions between them and other non-state actors.

Social movements can be defined in various ways. It is difficult to give a single definition because they, by nature, are shifting entities (Earle 2004:1), but "it is generally agreed that social movements are organisations, groups of people and individuals, who act together to bring about transformation in society" (Kaldor 2003:82). They are contrasted by tightly organised groups such as NGO's or political parties. Where social movements are loosely founded, NGO's are more institutional, structured and generally professional (Kaldor 2003:86). While NGO's are mostly composed of specialized, paid, professional staff and sometimes a limited group of volunteers, social movements are largely constructed by their volunteers/members. "Social Movements are their members" (Earle 2004:3). Where social movements' actions and goals are reactive responses

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<sup>16</sup> This point will be elaborated in section 4.3.3

to national or international politics, NGO's are more likely to have a fixed set of values and priorities (Earle 2004:3).

Tarrow (2011) argues that ‘contentious politics’ is at the base of social movements and that contentious politics frame the movements’ actions towards the external society. Contentious politics is defined by Tarrow as “[actions] used by people who have regular access to representative institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenges others or authorities” (Tarrow 2011:7). To this Kaldor adds that contentious politics have always existed, but social movements can be described as a modern way of conducting contentious polities (Kaldor 2003:82). Tarrow argues that contentious collective action serves as the basis of social movements’ action frame because it is the main and often only resource that “ordinary” people possess to demonstrate their claims against better-equipped opposing groups or states.

In addition, Tarrow argues that social movements create political opportunities, respond to threats, create collective identities, and bring people together to mobilize them against more powerful opponents. Social movements also build organisations, elaborate ideologies, socialize and mobilize constituencies, and their members engage in self-development and the construction of collective identities (Tarrow 2011:7-8). Tarrow adds that the basic properties of a social movement involve, “first, mounting collective challenges, second, drawing on social networks, common purposes, and cultural framework, and third, building solidarity through connective structures and collective identities to sustain collective action” (Tarrow 2011:8). To this Kaldor adds that social movements are cosmopolitan because they are concerned with issues that apply to human beings in general and not just local interests. They are autonomous and can directly address authorities relevant to their concern. They are flexible and develop routines of non-violent protest such as strikes and demonstrations that are easily transferable to different situations (Kaldor 2003:83).

In the following section, I will analyse Invisible Children through the lens of social movement theory. This will bring us to a discussion of whether Invisible Children actually can be understood as a social movement.

### 3.3 Motivating young people

In this section, I will analyse Invisible Children through the social movement theory to understand how Invisible Children motivates young people to act. This is done by analysing how Invisible Children creates collective identity and shared emotions among its members and which actions this enables.

Tarrow argues that a social movement uses three mechanisms to stimulate contentious action and promote solidarity internally in the movement: 1) they frame meaning for action<sup>17</sup>, 2) they define and creates collective identities among its members, and 3) they shape and reflect specific emotions to mobilize action (Tarrow 2011:142-143). I will analyse the two last components one by one.

### **3.3.1 Collective Identity**

Building a shared identity framework between the movement's members is an important component of a successful movement as collective identity ties the movement's members together in a shared cause. Tarrow states that "activists are often faced with the task of building solidarity among a diverse membership which can require very careful deliberate identity work" (Tarrow 2011:152). To this Tarrow adds that collective identity is seen as a "constructed set of boundary mechanisms that define who "we" are, who "they" are, and the location of the borders between them" (Tarrow 2011:143).

In her dissertation, Finnegan found that the members of Invisible Children are predominately upper-middle class, white females, adolescent students many of who attend private colleges and high schools. Jason Russell agrees and states that the movement's core is "14-15 to 23-24 year-old girls who are white, who have been raised in suburbia, who are Christian, who have enough disposable income to donate or buy stuff" (Finnegan 2011:71).

An activist describes the common identity and the members' shared worldview as a core element in the movement's success. She states, "Invisible Children can be so effective in motivating people [because] they all share a common understanding of the world, common language, common experiences" (Finnegan 201:75). Finnegan elaborates, "This common understanding of the world reflects the similar backgrounds of Invisible Children activists in the upper-middle suburbs of America" (Finnegan 2011:76). The similarity of the demography is exactly what the founders target in their filmmaking. Russell explains that when they are "making films, they are imagining their target audience to be a 14-year old high school freshman girl who "would have never thought of being a part of something like this"" (Finnegan 2011:71).

The co-founders and filmmakers playing a lead role in the films is an important factor for the identity framework in the movement. In every film, they star as three normal guys and share personal anecdotes and events. As an example from the film the Rescue shows, "This story begins in the suburbs of California with three normal guys. We grew up surfing, playing sports, and goofing around. But the one thing that we had in common is that we all love to make movies"

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<sup>17</sup> This is analysed in Chapter 4.

(Invisible Children 2009:3,00). The members of Invisible Children identify themselves with the founders who in the first documentary “The Rough Cut” were not much older than them. Beth, an intern at Invisible Children states, “The movie is just very raw, and it's—even though they were older than me they were kids, and you see these kids just go, they see something, they run into a problem and they're like, OK, now we have to fix this problem” (Kligler-Vilenchik et al. 2012:8-9). Invisible Children’s members identify with the founders’ frank description of themselves as “three normal guys” that travel to Africa in search for a story.

Invisible Children’s media is a key-element in the movement’s success in engaging young people, however, not only as entry points for the members’ engagement but also because it sustains them by creating shared collective identities. Kligler-Vilenchik et al state, “The organization's "media savvy," which members identify as unique, has an important role in creating [Invisible Children's] self-perceived image as a young, hip nonprofit” (Kligler-Vilenchik et al 2012:9). Finnegan adds, “The biography of the Invisible Children activists – built particularly upon race and class privilege – is critical to carrying out this unique form of contemporary activism” (Finnegan 2011:67). As we shall see later in this chapter, this target group fits perfectly with Invisible Children’s form of activism and fundraising strategy.

#### **3.2.2 Emotions**

Tarrow explains that shared emotions are essential in order to maintain solidarity among members and to transform claims into actions. Tarrow draws on Verta Taylor to explain this, “it is emotions that provide the ‘heat’ (...) that distinguishes social movement from dominant institutions” (Tarrow 2011:153). Similar to the shared demography and worldview and in line with Tarrow’s understanding of the emotion work in social movements, the members also share the same emotional foundation for being active in Invisible Children. The initial feeling many members shared was a surprise of not having any prior knowledge of the conflict. Ruth, a previous intern at Invisible Children, states, “I cannot believe that this is going on” and continuous “why have I never heard about this. I remember something in me shifted that night” (Kligler-Vilenchik et al 2012:7).

The motivations for being active in Invisible Children are focused on a wish and an obligation to help. For many, the motivational feeling is a perception of one's own good fortune versus the hardships of others, and a feeling of obligation to do good in the world (Kligler-Vilenchik et al 2012:15). With inspiration from Finnegan (2011), the different motivational feelings for being involved is divided into four categories: 1) Make a difference, 2) Guilt, 3) Feeling special, and 4) Belonging.

Kligler-Vilenchik et al. argue that many of the members had an urge to become involved, to *make a difference* - this was a challenge because traditional activist organizations, like the Peace Corps, offer limited possibilities for youth under 18 and often require extensive volunteer commitments. Other organizations may offer young people opportunities to become involved but are perceived as old-fashioned and outdated. Invisible Children has been successful in offering young people desirable and concrete ways of getting involved in a young, hip environment (Kligler-Vilenchik et al 2012:6). Jade, a former intern at Invisible Children, states, “They draw in a different crowd than a lot of organizations; other [organizations] draw large donors and we are staffed by young people, we focus on young people, and we realize that young people can make a difference if they're really passionate about it” (Kligler-Vilenchik et al 2012:9). Each film produced by the Invisible Children ends with a small and easy recipe on how people can get involved and make a difference. A member elaborates on this point, “Invisible Children goes to great lengths to insure that they are not just showing people sad stories for the sake of sad stories, but they are also trying to provoke people to take action to address the sad stories” (Finnegan 2011:66). Another member, who left school to become a roadie, shares the same feeling. She states, “I felt like that there was something going on in the world that I knew about and that I knew I had an opportunity to do something, and how could I possibly turn that down and turn these kids down (...) so that's why I like had to be here, and that's why I didn't care about leaving school or anything, like I knew it was ok, because I needed to help these people and um, I stay because the same reason, because I know what we are doing makes a difference” (Finnegan 2011:79).

In her fieldwork, Finnegan noted the discourse about *feeling guilty*, the members being aware of how well they live, and how difficult it is for others in the world. As an activist states, “I feel guilty because I have so much, and I know there are people who don't have a lot and um people who don't even have safety and security, and I have to try to ensure that other people have what I have” (Finnegan 2011:78). This point can be understood in relation to Kaldor's understanding of social movements as cosmopolitan, as the members are concerned with others' well-being<sup>18</sup>.

*Feeling special* in making activism is, according to Finnegan, grounded in two different aspects: the location and focus on innocent children functions as a clear moral framework,<sup>19</sup> and Invisible Children gives the members the possibility and obligation to make a difference through activism such as creating awareness and fundraising. As an activist states, “Invisible Children is great in that, they challenge you to do things you didn't even realize you could do, like plan a giant event and make it really successful” (Finnegan 2011:85). Finnegan elaborates, “Invisible Children does an

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<sup>18</sup> This point will be further discussed in chapter 4, as is function as an essential component in Invisible Children's motivational framing.

<sup>19</sup> This point will be elaborated in Chapter 4 and 6.

excellent job of not only challenging the young people who are involved but also affirming them and ensuring that they feel like they are part of something really important” (Finnegan 2011:85). In this perception, the collective emotion also underlines the collective identity and worldview between the members.

The members of the Invisible Children feel they *belong* to Invisible Children’s social network because they have made friends. As a staff member explained, “I say people come for the cause and stay for the community. You know, they come because their hearts are broken but that doesn’t sustain them; you need to look around to see who your sojourners are and if you like them” (Finnegan 2011:97). Finnegan also sees the social element as an important feature for the members, “Invisible Children activism is an attractive endeavour for young Americans because it’s a fun, social outlet, and it provides an important form of collective identity during the challenging years of adolescence” (Finnegan 2011:97). The roadie concept helps integrate solidarity in the movement. A high school teacher identified the roadies as a crucial component to what compels young people to stay engaged “almost every student involved with the movement knows a roadie personally, so they feel privy to the information and energy of the hub of the organization and movement” (Finnegan 2011:94).

Summing up, we can see that the shared demography, identity and emotions among the members help integrate a feeling of solidarity and belonging to Invisible Children which makes the members stay involved. Likewise, Invisible Children gives the members a feeling of obligation and ability to make a difference. Thus Invisible Children has been very successful in its mobilising strategy by creating strong collective identity and shared motivational emotions.

#### **3.4 No wave-making activism**

Invisible Children focuses its activism through promoting its media, raising awareness, and generating funds. It goes to great lengths to get people involved by making it easy and simple. As Invisible Children states in a film, “See a film and then hear a story directly from the heroes who have overcome unimaginable odds to bring peace, justice and hope to northern Uganda. Host a screening and leave your legacy” (Finnegan 2011:64).

The roadies help spread the voice of the movement and get people involved. At screenings, the roadies explain the simple way of getting involved and making a difference, “We can free them from this, he said, by taking one of the following three steps: 1) spread the message by showing the film to as many people as you can; 2) wear the Invisible Children t-shirt; and 3) sign-up for TRI-campaign, which is a campaign to give \$3/week to fund advocacy awareness, and events that will lead to rescue the child soldiers” (Finnegan 2011:65). Members of the organisation appreciate this

simple recipe for action and making a difference. As a roadie explained, “What I love about Invisible Children is that they don’t just present a problem. They also present options that you can take to address the problem” (Finnegan 2011:66). Another activist elaborates on this point, “It’s like you learn about the conflict and there are things you can do to help and there is like this clear, easy path to follow.” (Finnegan 2011:81). It is exactly these clear messages of action that the members find both easy and attractive.

The members are encouraged to make innovative fundraising events. Through organized competitions, Invisible Children challenges its members to be entrepreneurial and creative in their fundraising strategies where members are encouraged to document these tactics on video and upload and share them on YouTube (Brough 2012:181). The fundraising strategy has great synergy with the members’ identity, as they are able to use their network to access economic resources. Finnegan concludes, “All social movements need money but Invisible Children appears to have made fundraising a critical component of what student activists do. With the relative socioeconomic advantage of most members of Invisible Children, fundraising is an activity in which they can easily succeed; thus fuelling their inclination to do something good *for* others, meanwhile also feeling special and heroic in their efforts” (Finnegan 2011:91).

In Invisible Children’s media, emphasis is placed on the American donor/activist as much as if not more than their beneficiaries, the northern Ugandans. According to Brough, “[Invisible Children] unapologetically embraces the opportunity for personal growth offered by entrepreneurial participation in the humanitarian adventure” (Brough 2012:181). Thus Invisible Children focuses a lot of its energy on the members making sure they feel special in their awareness instead of focusing on the northern Ugandans it is advocating on behalf of. This is underlined by the fundraising competitions that Invisible Children sometimes hosts where the winners win a trip to Uganda to visit the schools and camps of internally displaced communities that their funds support.<sup>20</sup>

According to Finnegan, Invisible Children’s activism is different than other forms of progressive activism of social movements, as it embodies a less structural, analytical understanding of the situation in northern Uganda, and the tactics it utilizes to address the suffering and human rights abuse in the region. Instead of questioning the dynamics that allow a war to persist 25 years, Invisible Children simply seeks to obliterate Kony and the LRA in an effort to end the children’s suffering (Finnegan 2011:88). In many respects, it becomes more important to do something than not do anything. It is the action itself that becomes the focus. Finnegan elaborates, “The most

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<sup>20</sup> Invisible Children’s newest campaign #ZeroLRA underlines this point perfectly, as they use 8.30 minutes of the 9.10 minutes long video to explain the prices and competitions the fundraisers can win.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8o-iwXG4FdM> d.17.11.2013.

important thing is to take some action, any action: the worst case scenario is inaction in the face of suffering, even if the action doesn't align with addressing the particular social problem" (Finnegan 2011:80). A member reflects on this point, "(...) this group [Invisible Children] is the total opposite. I mean they are not only nonviolent but they are like ... non wavemaking, they don't like to make ripples ... they want to operate within the system to get as much done as possible instead of flipping the system on its head" (Finnegan 2011:89). This easy 'non wave-making' activism, where the members have been able to create a collective understanding, identity and feelings, has been a very successful strategy for Invisible Children. In addition, "(...) the movement does an excellent job of ensuring that participants have a face and are not just number in the masses" (Finnegan 2011:94) thereby making them special and individual in the collective actions.

However, as we can see through the theoretical framework of Tarrow, this notion of activism is contrary to traditional social movement theory and activity, as social movements normally directly seek to disrupt authorities as an integral part of their strategies for change.

#### **3.4.1 Invisible Children as a social movement**

In this "non wave-making" form of activism lies the question of whether Invisible Children actually can be understood as a social movement rather than e.g. a NGO. Tarrow defines social movements as conducting contentious actions; meaning acts "that fundamentally challenges other authorities", but as we have seen, Invisible Children does not seek to challenge authorities but instead works closely with them. Finnegan explains why by reflecting on Invisible Children members' common background, "It is premised on meritocracy and an acceptance that capitalist economic systems and strategic military operatives are viable. It recognizes that, for the most part, the world is a good place and that individuals can choose to make the world even better by raising money and talking about the horrible atrocities experienced on the other side of the globe" (Finnegan 2011:76).

According to Earle, social movement is distinguished from e.g. NGOs in the overt politicisation of their goal, as "they struggle to integrate previously excluded groups and issues into local or national politics" (Earle 2004:2). In this position, there lies an understanding of social movements challenging the political status quo where members often position themselves in clear opposition to the government (Earle 2004:2). Even though Invisible Children seeks to lobby the government to take action, it is more an effort to get the US to shift priorities rather than fundamentally change their policies or orientation towards Uganda. However, this is still a struggle to get the government to include capturing Kony into its national politics. Ben Keesey, CEO of Invisible Children underlines this point, "The United States will never put our military and our personnel on the line for this because there is no national security interests: it's not in our selfish priority (...) So until

we, as the public, shift that, and say our interest and our priority is not just about us (...) they are never gonna change" (Finnegan 2011:103-104).

Earle further adds that the relationship between social movements and state is complicated. Even though movements may often oppose government, they are equally dependent on it to address certain wrongs or grant rights, and social movements have to engage in strategic interaction with states (Earle 2004:2). Though Invisible Children does not seek to challenge US foreign politics, it still engages strategically with it and sometimes successfully. The President of the United States, Barack Obama signed the "Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act" where Invisible Children was one of the advocacy groups that had influenced the bill. Obama stated, "We have seen your reporting, your websites, your blogs, and your video postcards – you have made the plight of the children visible to us all" (White House 24.05.2010)<sup>21</sup>.

Invisible Children fits well into other characteristics of social movements such as: members share a collective identity, worldview and feelings which, according to Earle, is the most crucial definition of a social movement. Essential for Invisible Children is its creative use of media to tell and share its story. It uses film and networking through social media platforms which function as new and innovative platforms for activism. Invisible Children's use of technology is seen as amusing, exciting and terrifying in the eyes of its young targets and has been shown to be very effective. Invisible Children's films serve as a platform to advocate its actions and goals, and these have changed during their time of activism and lobbying. Where the first goal and actions only evolved around creating awareness (TheRoughCut 2004), it developed to focus on rescuing Kony's child soldiers (TheRescue 2009)<sup>22</sup> and to making Kony famous in order to keep US military in Uganda (Kony2012).

The discussion on whether Invisible Children is a social movement could be further developed. Even though Invisible Children's politics may not be defined as contentious, it holds many of the theory's other characteristics that are central to the analysis and discussion in this thesis, why I find it relevant to refer to it as a social movement.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this Chapter, I have made an argument for how Invisible Children can be understood as a social movement. Invisible Children fits well into the most crucial definition of social movements, namely creating collective identity and shared emotions among its members. Invisible Children has been very successful in building collective identity among its members which is crucial for its success.

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/statement-president-signing-lords-resistance-army-disarmament-and-northern-uganda-act> d.27.10.2023

<sup>22</sup> <http://vimeo.com/3400420> d.26.10.2013

Invisible Children's media are naturally the most important aspect in motivating people to get involved, as the media often are the members' first encounter with Invisible Children and its purpose. The media target a young demographic who share a common understanding of the world, common language, and common experiences. The founders playing a lead role in Invisible Children's media also contributes to the motivational success as the founders becomes a symbol of what the young members can accomplish when engaging with Invisible Children.

The media also creates shared emotions among the members. I analysed these emotions within four categories: making a difference, guilt, feeling special, and belonging. First, Invisible Children made the members feel that they had an opportunity and obligation to *make a difference* through simple fundraising events. Second, the members feel *guilt* because they have so much compared to the northern Ugandans. This can be understood in line with Kaldor's cosmopolitan aspect of a social movement. This point will be developed in section 4.5. Lastly, the members feel they *belong* to the community of Invisible Children, and it functions as a social outlet based on a hip, young environment which sustains the members.

The collective identity and shared emotions Invisible Children creates among its members underlines the no wave-making activism. This form of activism underlines the cultural understanding of Invisible Children's members. It recognizes that the world, for the most part, is a good place where the members have the opportunity to make the world even better by fundraising events for the Ugandans. The members are attracted to this form of activism as it proposes feasible actions that entail a clear, easy path that the members can follow. Additionally, Invisible Children is good at recognising each member's individual effort which makes the members feel special. In this no-wave making understanding of action, it becomes important to do something rather than not to do anything in the face of the Ugandan suffering.

## 4. Kony 2012

In this chapter, I will analyse how Invisible Children frames meaning for action through the Kony2012 campaign thereby answering the second part of the first question of the main research question: *How can Invisible Children's success in framing meaning for action be explained?*

Social movements create meaning for action through their action frame why we need to investigate Invisible Children's action frame in order to understand how it frames meaning for actions in the Kony2012 campaign. This is mainly analysed through Benford and Snow's (2000) theoretical framework of *Framing Processes and Social Movement*.

First, I will introduce the film, Kony2012 which is the main outlet for the Kony2012 campaign. I will illustrate the film's aim and purpose, the proposed solution and how the campaign called to action. Then, I will analyse Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign. And lastly, I will discuss the critique that emerged immediately following the success of the campaign.

### 4.1 Introducing Kony 2012

The Kony2012 campaign was officially kicked off when the 30 minutes long film, with the same name, was released on different social media platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo on 5 March 2012. The goal was to raise awareness of the atrocities committed by Joseph Kony in the hope of bringing him to justice. The video quickly spread after Invisible Children's network of members and several celebrities<sup>23</sup> tweeted and shared the video on different social media platforms (TheWeek 24.07.2013)<sup>24</sup>. The video reached 100 million views in 6 days which made it the fastest growing viral video in history (InvisibleChildren/Kony 2013)<sup>25</sup>.

Eight minutes into the film, Invisible Children introduces the film's single purpose, namely to stop the LRA and their leader Joseph Kony, and the film shows everyone watching exactly how this is to be done. Before revealing the details, Russell explains, in simple terms, what Joseph Kony and his rebel group the LRA have been doing, "For 26 years, Kony has been abducting children into his rebel group the LRA, turning the girls into sexslaves and the boys into child soldiers. He makes them mutilate people's faces, and he forces' them to kill their own parents. And this is not just a few children; it has been over 30,000 of them (...) and as if Kony's crime isn't bad enough, he is not fighting for any cause but only to maintain his power." (Invisible Children 2012:11,00). Jason

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<sup>23</sup> Celebrities such as: Rihanna, Oprah, Sean Diddy Combs, Justin Bieber, Nina Dobrev, Ian Somerhalder The Kardashian sisters and Nicole Richie all tweeted about Kony 2012 asking their followers to see and share the video.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,20576894,00.html#> d.27.10.2013

<sup>25</sup> <http://invisiblchildren.com/kony/> d.27.10.2013

Russel, the films narrator, states that, “It is obvious that Kony should be stopped. The problem is that 99% of the world doesn’t know who he is (...) If they knew, he would have been stopped long ago” (Invisible Children 2012:3,30). The film and thereby the campaign “expired” on the 31 December 2012, giving the campaign a clear ending point where the goals of the campaign, capturing Kony, was to be reached.

Invisible Children is advocating for a simple line of actions to bring Kony to justice, “In order for Kony to be arrested this year, the Ugandan military has to find him. In order to find him, they need the technology and training to track him in the vast jungle. That’s where the American advisers come in, but in order for the American advisers to be there, the US government has to deploy them. They’ve done that. But if the government doesn’t believe the people care about arresting Kony, the mission will be cancelled. In order for the people to care, they have to know, and they will only know if Kony’s name is everywhere” (Invisible Children 2012:21,44). Invisible Children is thus arguing that like the invisible child soldiers of Uganda (thereof the movement’s name), Kony is invisible, and to bring him to justice by making him famous and shed light on his crimes. Invisible Children is therefore specifically targeting twelve politicians and twenty culture makers because it argues that the voice of the culture makers/famous Americans spread instantly, and the policy makers are being targeted to keep their attention on Kony.

The film ends with four actions everyone can do straight away to start making Kony famous:

1. Sign the pledge to show your support
2. Get the bracelet and the action kit
3. Sign up for TRI to donate a few dollars a month and join our army for peace
4. Above all share this movie online, it’s free. (Invisible Children 2012:29,31).

## **4.2 Collective action frame**

In this section, I will give a theoretical introduction to the framework of “collective action frames” which I will use to analyse how Invisible Children frames meaning for action.

Benford and Snow have adapted the concept of framing from Erving Goffman (1974). Goffman’s concept of framing was focused on individuals but has later been related to how social movements construct meaning for action. Goffman defined frames as denoted “schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrence within their life space and the world at large” (Benford&Snow 2000:614). Benford and Snow understand frames as helping to render events or occurrences meaningfully and thereby function to organize experience and guide action.

Snow and Benford (1992, 2000) argue that collective action frames have an interpretive function by simplifying and condensing the “world out there”, and by selectively punctuating and encoding

objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action within one's present or past environment with the intention to mobilize potential members. Thus collective action frames are action oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of social movements (Benford&Snow 2000:614, 1992:137.). Punctuating refers to, "collective action frames [that] serve as accenting devices that either underscore and embellish the seriousness and injustice of a social condition or redefine as unjust and immoral what was previously seen as unfortunate" (Snow&Benford 1992:137). To this, Snow and Benford add that framing a sequence of events as unjust is not sufficient. Some sense of blame or causality needs to be specified as well as a corresponding action for solving or ameliorating the situation. Social movements orient their frames towards action and at the same time fashion them at the intersection between a target population's inherited culture and its own goals and values (Tarrow 2011:145) as we saw in section 3.3.

Collective actions frames are, according to Benford and Snow, constituted by the "core framing tasks" which holds three components: 1) *diagnostic framing* understood as problem identification and attribution, 2) *prognostic framing* understood as articulating a solution, and 3) *motivational framing* which analyses the members' agency and the motivation for action (Benford&Snow 2000:615). I use these three components as an analytical strategy to structure the analysis of how Invisible Children frames meaning for action. I will analyse Invisible Children's framing processes by analysing these three components one by one.

### **4.3 Diagnostic framing – assigning blame**

The first component, diagnostic framing, focuses on blame and responsibility - especially identifying the source(s) of causality, blame, and/or culpable agents. A social movement needs to form an agreement regarding the nature of the problem, deciding who and what to blame (Benford&Snow 2000:616).

To assign blame and responsibility in campaigning, Invisible Children needs to frame the information so that it fits the diagnostic framing. We can understand the framing of information through Keck and Sikkink's (1998) theoretical framework *Transnational Advocacy Network*<sup>26</sup>. Keck and Sikkink understand information framing as a core element to motivate political action. Influence is gained by presenting alternate sources of information which provide not only facts but testimonies - stories told by people whose lives have been affected by some event or unjust situation. Facts and testimonies are interpreted by framing issues in simply terms of right and

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<sup>26</sup> I use Keck and Sikkink's theoretical framework to underline the need of information framing, in order to frame meaning for action. I am not interested in analysing Invisible Children as a transnational advocacy network, in section 2.3.2 I have made an argumentation for this theoretical use.

wrong, as their purpose is to persuade people and stimulate them to act (Keck&Sikkink 1998:18-19). Thus Invisible Children, in its diagnostic framing, frames the information in the campaign in terms of blame and responsibility. It does this to show that a given state of affairs is neither natural nor accidental, to identify the responsible party and to propose credible solutions.

The Kony2012 film has a clear focus on three individuals who each play a central role in telling the story of northern Uganda and assigning right and wrong in the war: 1) Jason Russell, the films narrator, 2) the Ugandan Jacob who's testimony frames the conflict, and 3) Gavin, Jason Russell's son, who functions as an innocent character who hears about the conflict for the first time and reacts instantly.

*Jason Russell* plays a lead character throughout the film. He gives the viewer an understanding of the history of the war and its implications. The film begins by picturing personal events of his private life such as his wife giving birth, pictures of himself and his son Gavin doing normal everyday things thus putting himself at the centre of the story. He shows the viewer his first meeting with Jacob and the other 'invisible children' affected by the war, and he shows his promise to Jacob - 'the promise that was going to change his life'. "Everything in my heart told me to do something. And so, I made him a promise: We are also going to do everything that we can to stop them (...) We are, we are going to stop them [the LRA]" (Invisible Children 2012:7, 30). This promise is what founded the Invisible Children. The film portrays Russel and later Invisible Children as American heroes saving innocent children in Africa. Russell further adds, "I made that promise to Jacob not knowing what it would mean but now I do. Over the past nine years, I have fought to fulfil it. And the fight has led me here; to this movie you're watching. Because that promise is not just about Jacob or me, it is also about you. And this year, 2012, is the year when we can finally fulfil it" (Invisible Children 2012:7,59). He thereby shows that his fight has become everyone's fight for a better, united world.

When we meet *Jacob* for the first time, he and his friend are just two of the hundreds of children who are commuting to Gulu every night to sleep safely in protection from the LRA-kidnappings. Jacob tells his heartbreaking story of his and his brother's abduction by the LRA and how they killed his brother right in front of him when he tried to flee. This is the only Ugandan testimony in the film, and it becomes the main expression of the need and suffering of the children of Uganda who are portrayed as innocent victims. "*Jacob*: So it is better when you kill us. If possible you can kill us, you kill us. For us, we don't want now to stay. *Russell*: You don't want to stay on earth? *Jacob*: We are only two, no one taking care of us. We are not going to school. *Russell*: you would rather die than stay on earth? *Jacob*: Yes. *Russell*: Now, even now? *Jacob*: Even now, how are we going to stay now in our future?" (Invisible Children 2012:6,07). Jacob thereby gives the

impression that there is no reason for the children of northern Uganda to live, and shows the viewers that this is what Invisible Children is fighting for.<sup>27</sup>

*Gavin*, Russell's son, represents the innocent and purely goodhearted child who hears about the conflict for the first time and reacts instantaneously. “*Russell*: What do I do for a job? *Gavin*: You stop the bad guys from being mean. *Russell*: Who are the bad guys? *Gavin*: Uhm... Starwars people (...) *Russell*: This is the bad guy, Joseph Kony [showing him a picture of Kony]. *Gavin*: This is the bad guy [pointing at the picture]? (...) *Russell*: Joseph Kony, he has an army. Okay. And what he does is he takes children from their parents, and he gives them a gun, and he makes them shoot and kill other people. *Gavin*: But they are not gonna do what he says ‘cause they are nice guys, right? *Russell*: They don't want to do what he says. But he forces them to do bad things. What do you think of that? *Gavin*: ...Sad” (Invisible Children 2012:9,16). Latter in the film, another scene with Gavin appears as directly continuing the first scene. “*Russell*: What do you think we should do about it? *Gavin*: We should stop him!” (Invisible Children 2012:13,02).

Through these testimonies, it becomes clear that Invisible Children is assigning blame and responsibility for the atrocities committed to the northern Ugandan population to Joseph Kony and framing the children of Uganda as innocent victims of Kony's atrocities. This diagnostic framing can be understood as an injustice framing, as it is addressing unjust suffering. Tarrow draws on Barrington Moore to make the point that any movement against oppression “has to develop a new diagnosis and remedy for existing form of suffering (...) by which this suffering stands morally condemned.” (Tarrow 2011:145). As we have seen, the Kony2012 campaign is framed through a very simple storyline focusing on unjust action towards the victims, the children of northern Uganda, and the responsible enemy, Joseph Kony. Through Jacob's testimony, Invisible Children portrays the children's fear and suffering of the child-abduction by Joseph Kony framing them as the innocent victims that everyone watching should help save by engaging with Invisible Children. Furthermore, the horrific actions of Kony, who is mutilating, abducting and destroying his own ethnic group, is framed as pure evil and comparable to the world worst criminals<sup>28</sup> which is underlined with Invisible Children arguing that Kony does not have any “political goal” and “is not supported by anyone” (Invisible Children 2012:19,02). The co-founder Laren Pool exemplifies this very well when he states, “After 23 years, we know what we need to do to stop this senseless violence. It's one man. It's Joseph Kony. He's a monster (...) this one man is preventing millions of people from going home (...) he is the world's first and arguably the worst

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<sup>27</sup> Jim Moore sees this interview with Jacob as the most troubling part of the Kony2012 film. Moore argues that it is unwillingness to let Jacob finishing his sentences – Russell interrupts Jacob three times, where Moore understand the tone of his interruption as shock and dismay, which he argues are more about how Russell feels listening to Jacob, than what Jacob is feeling the needs to express. Were Russell focuses on Jacob death wish, and Jacob on what is lacking in his life (Moore 2012:96).

<sup>28</sup> This point is elaborated in section 4.5.

criminal near here. Not because of him but because of the victims – because of the mothers, the children, the people in the IDP camps – they stand with us to hopefully end Africa's longest running conflict" (Finnegan 2011:101).

We can thereby understand Invisible Children's diagnostic framing as an injustice frame – assigning blame and responsibility to Joseph Kony who it frames as pure evil without any political goal. The northern Ugandans are framed as innocent victims who need to be saved by the American heroes. In picturing Gavin testimony as the innocent pure boy's understanding of the world as good vs. bad, he becomes a motif that substitutes for the audience's instant reactions. If Gavin a 5ish year old boy can understand and support the campaigns simple solutions to stop Kony then so can everyone.

#### **4.4 Prognostic framing – a simple solution**

Prognostic framing, the second core framing task, involves the articulation of the proposed solutions to the problem or at least a plan of attack and strategies for carrying out this plan (Benford&Snow 2000:616). Prognostic framing addresses what is to be done in relation to the diagnostic framing as assigning blame and responsibility to a specific problem constrain a range of possible solutions and strategies (Benford&Snow 2000:616).

As we saw in the section 4.1, Invisible Children is articulating a simple line of actions to reach the proposed solution: a military intervention to capture and bring Joseph Kony to justice. In order for this to happen, Invisible Children argues that we need to make him famous to make people care and make the American Government take action. To do this, Invisible Children encourages the viewers of the video to share it and targeted twenty preselected culture makers<sup>29</sup> and twelve policymakers<sup>30</sup> to speak the voice of Invisible Children and "use their power for good". Invisible Children is targeting celebrities because, Invisible Children argues, they "have a loud voice and what they talk about spreads instantly" (Invisible Children 2012:23,17). It is targeting policymakers because it is the policymakers who have "the authority to see Kony captured" (Invisible Children 2012:24,02).

Invisible Children already had a pre-existing network of members in place to "like and share" the Kony2012 video through their social media profiles on Twitter, MySpace and Facebook. The support from the members was essential to help spread the video. Additionally, Invisible Children made it easy for its members to lobby the chosen target audience. Visitors on Invisible Children's

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<sup>29</sup> The target celebrities are: Ben Affleck, Justin Bieber, Bono, Stephen Colbert, George Clooney, Ellen DeGeneres, Jay-Z, Angelina Jolie, Lady Gaga, Rush Limbaugh, Rihanna, Bill O'Reilly, Ryan Seacrest, Taylor Swift, Tim Tebow, Rick Warren and Oprah Winfrey. The billionaires: Warren Buffett, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg.

<sup>30</sup> The target policymakers are: George W. Bush, Kay Granger, Patrick Leahy, Bill Clinton, Condoleezza Rice, John Kerry, Mitt Romney, Harry Reid, Stephen Harper, John Boehner, Ban Ki Mon and Ileana Ros-Lehtine.

website were encouraged to click on the images of the chosen culture- or policymaker after which an auto-generated tweet would pop up which pings the chosen celebrity and asks him/her to view the video and support the cause. This could be done with just two clicks (D'Zurilla 04.03.2012, SocialFlow 14.03.2012)<sup>31</sup>. The outcome of this tactic was thousands of tweets targeted at celebrities' tweeter-accounts. E.g. Ellen Degeneres had over 36,000 tweets directed at her pleading her to respond to the cause, as did Justin Bieber, Lady Gaga, Oprah etc. Nine of the twenty target celebrities chose to publish their support to the cause. When the celebrities started to share and tweet about the video, it gave the campaign additional attention (SocialFlow 14.03.2012).

Through this kind of leverage politics, Invisible Children is making it very easy to "care" and to have a loud voice. Starring as the lead focus in an episode of the TV-series Veronica Mars in 2007 and being interviewed by Oprah Winfrey on her show in 2009, Invisible Children already had many celebrities advocating to support and enter actively into its cause. These and many other celebrities tweeted about the Kony2012 campaign and helped the film to spread fast.

Richey and Ponte have focused on the increasing engagement of celebrities as development actors. They argue that celebrities "have become the faces of doing good, of credibility, and of believability" (Richey&Ponte 12:2014), adding that celebrities have become trusted advisors in development issues that extend beyond the actual scope of their relevant experiences. It is not in the scope of this thesis to argue the role of celebrities in development, but through Richey and Ponte's analysis, we can understand why Invisible Children targets celebrities in its awareness campaigning. Target faces like Bono, George Clooney and Oprah have a credible history of engaging in development campaigns why their voices advocating for Kony2012 is an important element in spreading the message and underlining its credibility.

Summing up: Invisible Children's prognostic frame is articulating a military intervention to capture Kony as the only possible solution to bring him to justice. The American advocacy role is to show the US government that the people care about ending the war in Uganda by advocating preselected celebrities and policymakers to share and care through social media platforms.

#### **4.5 Motivational framing – call to arms**

The last framing component, motivational framing, provides a "call to arms" that entails the rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action. This is also understood as the agency component that through socially constructed vocabularies provided adherents with compelling accounts for engaging in collective action (Benford&Snow 2000:617). I will analyse this vocabulary

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<sup>31</sup> <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/gossip/2012/03/kony-2012-which-20-celebrities-were-targeted.html> d.16.08.2013 & <http://blog.socialflow.com/post/7120244932/data-viz-kony2012-see-how-invisible-networks-helped-a-campaign-capture-the-worlds-attention> d.23.10.2013

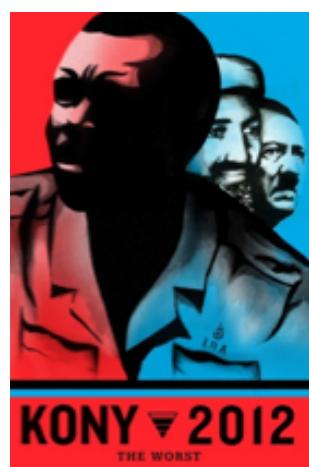
through Invisible Children's use of slogans and how these "call to arms". Afterwards, I will demonstrate how the slogans relate to two motivational values analysed through Schwartz's value system presented by Holmes et al (2011) and Darnton and Kirk (2011).

The film 'Mobilization' presents Invisible Children's understandings of successful activism. For Invisible Children a key element for a successful movement is a clear, conceivable goal and an unwavering commitment to achieve it, it state, "We are committed to empowering everyone who encounters our tours and our films, to take direct action by engaging their political leaders and amplifying the voices of the LRA affected communities" (InvisibleChildren/work 2013:2,35), and further adds, "The goal has always been to turn awareness into effective actions, and online connection into a real life experience" (InvisibleChildren/work 2013:6,24).

Invisible Children uses multiple slogans in its campaigning to empower and stimulate such actions. The slogans mostly refer to activism and getting people involved in the movement. One of the most famous slogans presented in teaser for the official Kony2012 film states, "Don't study history – make history" which is followed up by "stop at nothing" (Invisible Children 2012a:1,02)<sup>32</sup>. The slogan underlines the point that action should be taken now and argues that we need to make history instead of studying it. Likewise "stop at nothing" shows Invisible Children's commitment to end the atrocities in Uganda by bringing Kony to justice.

Another slogan presented in the Kony2012 film states, "We see these kids, we hear their voice, this war must stop, we will not fear, we will fight war" (Invisible Children 2012:17,10). Linking this slogan to the one above, Invisible Children underlines the point that it is ready to use any means possible to stop the war in Uganda by referring to its advocacy as fighting a war.

One of the Kony2012 posters carries a strong symbolic message. The poster displays Joseph Kony together with Osama Bin Laden and Adolf Hitler, thereby giving the impression that Kony is comparable with the one of the world's worst mass murderers, Hitler, and with America's favourite public enemy, Bin Laden. The poster serves as a clear branding of Kony as pure evil. The film also shows pictures from the Holocaust and the Rwanda genocide to underline the same point of evilness. References to the genocide in Rwanda, just a decade earlier, are linked with the feeling of guilt because of the US' failure to intervene.



<sup>32</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwN-WZjgrSQ&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PL3C099B53D7DB6C1D>  
d.15.08.2013.

The poster and the slogans all aim to frame the Ugandan war and the action one should take towards it in a simple, dualistic, evil vs. victim understanding.

Another Kony2012 poster shows the inverted power triangle that symbolises a new understanding of world power, “It’s always been that the decisions made by the few with money and power



dictated the priorities of their government and the stories in the media. They determine the lives and the opportunities of their citizens. But now, there is something bigger than that. The people of the world see each other and can protect each other. It’s turning the system upside down, and it changes everything” (Invisible Children 2012:27,05). By making the triangle a symbol of Invisible Children and calling its members “the fourth estate”, it is referring to a new understanding of power in the world where Facebook and other social media are connecting people which give them a new power to influence governments. The global connection also symbolises the global citizenship and equality among all human beings.

Invisible Children argues that the world is connected through social media where we share ideas and do not think in borders – thereby moving towards a global cosmopolitan understanding. The argumentation is that it becomes Invisible Children’s (and everyone else’s) responsibility to promote justice in the world, starting with the arrest of Joseph Kony.

Invisible Children is focussing its action frame on a specific set of values. According to Holm et al (2011) and Darnton and Kirk (2011), values represent the root of the motivational system. They are our guiding principles by which we act. They influence the attitudes we have, and how we evaluate both our own actions and those of others (Holmes et al 2011:8, Darnton&Kirk 2011:40).



(Holmes et al. 2011:13)

Holmes et al and Darnton and Kirk draw on Schwartz's value system which comprises 56 value 'labels' that can be boiled down into just ten values types, highlighted in the figure.<sup>33</sup> All people hold all values but the balance between them vary from individual to individual. The degree of how easy or difficult people hold two particular values reflect the level of compatibility or conflict between them (Darnton&Kirk 2011:41). Compatible values appear adjacent to one another, and conflicting values appear opposite.

Looking closer at Invisible Children's slogans, they emphasized a need for social justice, equality, responsibility and power for change. Compared with the motivational value system, I will argue that Invisible Children is advocating within the values of 'Universalism' and 'Benevolence'. These values can be seen to motivate action to tackle a wide range of 'bigger than self' problems (Darnton&Kirk 2011:43). According to Holmes et al, the values represent: 1) Universalism: understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and nature, and 2) Benevolence: preservation and enhancement of welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact (Holmes et al. 2011:12).

In understanding these values, in relation to the cosmopolitan goals Invisible Children is advocating for, we can see that Invisible Children is emphasizing what Miller calls *strong moral cosmopolitanism* which argues that all human beings are subject to the same set of moral laws why we must show equal moral concern and responsibility for human beings everywhere (Miller 2007:24,44)<sup>34</sup>. In this particular world-view, we have a moral responsibility to help the Ugandans in their plight, as we would expect others to help us if we were in same situation. Additionally, we saw in section 3.3.2 that the members experience a feeling of an obligation to act with statements like, "I have to try to ensure that other people have what I have" and "I had an opportunity to do something" which also underline the values of universalism and strong moral cosmopolitanism that Invisible Children uses to punctuate its framing for action to call to arms.

## 4.6 Criticism and responses

In the following, I will discuss the criticism that followed immediately after the release and success of the Kony2012 film. In this section, I will briefly illustrate the main critical points before going into a deeper discussion with the critical points that relate to the framing of meaning for action as this is most relevant for the thesis' main research question. This is done to investigate which implications Invisible Children's frame of meaning for action create and will raise important questions of knowledge and responsibility.

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<sup>33</sup> Rather than occurring randomly, the values are related to each other; some were unlikely to be prioritized strongly at the same time by the same individual, where others often was prioritized strongly simultaneously (Holm et al 2011:12).

<sup>34</sup> Miller himself dismisses this strong version of moral cosmopolitanism, and is arguing for a weaker version in relation to responsibility. This discussion is interesting, but not relevant for this thesis.

Critics accuse the young members of engaging in *slacktivism* - practicing easy meaningless forms of social action that does not go beyond pressing ‘share’ on social medias and have little or no effect beyond making themselves feel good. Additionally, some critics argue that the Kony2012 activism is a form of *consumerism* where Invisible Children encourage purchasing a \$30 action kit and sign up to donate to make social change (Rowland 3.11.2012)<sup>35</sup>.

*The military intervention*, Invisible Children is advocating as the solution to stop Kony, has also received criticism. Scholars have pointed out that the Ugandan army and president Museveni have an incentive for keeping the LRA alive as it justifies the Ugandan government’s high defence budget (de Waal 10.02.2012)<sup>36</sup>. Keating argues that stopping Kony will not change anything, and if more hardware and money flow was add to Museveni’s military, Invisible Children’s campaign may even worsen some problems (Keating 07.03.2012)<sup>37</sup>. Other have added that the Ugandan military has a poor human rights records in northern Uganda which is why a military intervention may bring further harm to the northern Ugandans. To this other critics add that the LRA is no longer in Uganda and even that LRA no longer represent any major threat to the stability in the region. De Waal states that peace and stability began returning to northern Uganda seven years ago with focus on reconstruction and reconciliation of the communities (de Waal 11.03.2012).

Invisible Children has also been criticised for its use of *economic resources*, as it spends less than a third of the money it raises directly on the Ugandan development programmes. The majority of its funding is focused on advocacy, filmmaking and fundraising (Zuckerman 8.03.2012)<sup>38</sup>.

One of the main critiques towards the Kony2012 campaign has been that Invisible Children is *oversimplifying the conflict*, focusing on just one bad guy who should be stopped by these very simple actions, making the conflict ahistorical. It has raised the question of bad advocacy (bad advocacy) and whether it is always better to do something.

Additional critics argue that Invisible Children gives *no agency to the Ugandans* and the local initiatives in the area. The main criticism argues that Invisible Children’s advocacy focuses on American awareness - American solutions with American military intervention, not including any local initiatives or solutions (Zuckerman 8.03.2012). Moore argues that the missing dates of the footage are a fundamental problem. According to Moore, this is important because dateless footage

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<sup>35</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mikaela-luttrellrowland/consumerism-trumps-education\\_b\\_1337067.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mikaela-luttrellrowland/consumerism-trumps-education_b_1337067.html)  
d.23.10.2013. Jenkins argue however that this critique ignores the possibility that the movie may be meaningful in mobilizing young people as civic actors [http://henryjenkins.org/2012/03/why\\_youth\\_are\\_drawn\\_to\\_invisib.html](http://henryjenkins.org/2012/03/why_youth_are_drawn_to_invisib.html)  
d.22.10.2013.

<sup>36</sup> [http://africanarguments.org/2012/03/11/don’t-elevate-joseph-kony-by-alex-de-waal/](http://africanarguments.org/2012/03/11/don-t-elevate-joseph-kony-by-alex-de-waal/) d.20.08.2013  
<sup>37</sup> [http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/03/07/guest\\_post\\_joseph\\_kony\\_is\\_not\\_in\\_uganda\\_and\\_other\\_complicated\\_things?wp\\_login\\_redirect=0](http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/03/07/guest_post_joseph_kony_is_not_in_uganda_and_other_complicated_things?wp_login_redirect=0) d.23.10.2013  
<sup>38</sup> <http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2012/03/08/unpacking-kony-2012/> d.23.10.2013

of sobbing African children reinforces the media stereotypes about Africa as a place of unending violence (Moore 2012:94)<sup>39</sup>.

In the following, I will discuss the last two critical points more comprehensively, as I understand them as essential in relation to the framing meaning for action conducted by Invisible Children in the Kony2012 campaign.

#### **4.6.1 A simple ahistorical campaign**

According to Keck and Sikkink, it requires clear powerful messages that appeal to shared principles to make an effective action frame that often have more impact on state policy than advice of technical experts. An important part of the political struggle over information is precisely whether an issue is defined primarily as technical and is subject to consideration by “qualified” experts or as something that concerns a broader global constituency (Keck&Sikkink 1998:19).

In Russell’s statement, “Because that promise is not just about Jacob or me, it is also about you”, he is advocating for a shared, global responsibility to take action towards ending the conflict in Uganda. In this particular world-view, we have a moral obligation to help the Ugandans in their plight. Invisible Children is then advocating that arresting Joseph Kony is not just a political technical problem nor is it natural or accidental. In this framing, it becomes a problem of the global community where everyone can and should do everything possible to stop Joseph Kony because “it’s the right thing to do”.

To this, Keck and Sikkink point out, there can be a conflict in the multiple goals in the campaigns, they state, “To be credible, the information produced by networks must be reliable and well documented. To gain attention, the information must be timely and dramatic. Sometimes these multiple goals of information politics conflict, but both credibility and drama seem to be essential components of a strategy aimed at persuading publics and policymakers to change their minds” (Keck&Sikkink 1998:19).

The critiques against the Kony2012 campaign have been that Invisible Children has chosen the dramatic presentation of war in Uganda over the credible use of information. Dramatic and emotional pictures and stories have gotten more attention in the campaign than credible solutions and reliable, well-documented information. Sverker Finnström refers to this dramatic, emotional argumentation as “magical”<sup>40</sup>. He states, “The most prominent feature of the Invisible Children films is the creation and constant re-creation of a magical master narrative; the lobby reduces,

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<sup>39</sup> The two last critical point will be discussed here, but further elaborated Chapter 6

<sup>40</sup> Finnström defines magic as: “That which we do not yet understand, a measure of your our incomprehension of local explanations for any given situation” (Finnström 2012:128).

depoliticizes and dehistoricizes a murky reality of globalized war into an essentialized black-and-white story that pits the modern Ugandan government and its international partners against the barbarian LRA” (Finnström 2012:130). Finnström’s main critique is that Invisible Children is turning a very complex civil war into a good vs. bad ahistorical focus and ignores that the proposed solution, a military intervention, will have serious consequences for the population of Uganda. He states, “The world viewing Joseph Kony as a global poster boy for Africa’s problems will, to be sure, make things worse for him; however, the increased foreign and domestic military presence will also serve to further militarize the region as a whole, as governments sending armed forces can justify their actions by magically referring back to Kony” (Finnström 2012:133)<sup>41</sup>. Alex de Wall echoes the same critique towards Invisible Children putting focus on the previous atrocities committed by Ugandan governments and president, Yoweri Museveni against the northern population, stating, “In elevating Kony as a global celebrity, the embodiment of evil, and advocating a military solution, the campaign isn’t just simplifying, it is irresponsibly naïve” (de Wall 11.03.2012), referring to the fact that a military solution will play well into the Ugandan governments interests.

Invisible Children answers these critiques in the film ‘Kony 2012 part 2’, a follow-up from Kony2012. In the first scene of the film, Nobert Mao, former presidential candidate in Uganda states, “Let those who are professors write their books and create academic awareness. But this one grabs you by the gut and shakes you until you are forced to pay attention. That’s the essence of awareness; people are now forced to pay attention” (Invisible Children 2012b:0,52)<sup>42</sup>. In the next scene, Jolly Okot, Invisible Children’s country director and the person who introduced the founders to the conflict in 2003, states, “Awareness is number one, number two: action and a way forward” (Invisible Children 2012b:1,10). Nicholas Kristof, an American journalist working with issues in Africa also expresses the need for raising awareness and argues that the film’s simplified messages are what is getting the viewers’ attention, “Complexity is, er, complicated: It has been a leading excuse for inaction during atrocities – during the Armenian genocide, during the Holocaust, during Rwanda, during the Bosnian slaughter. Each episode truly was complicated, but, in retrospect we let nuance paralyze us.” (Kristof 14.03.2012)<sup>43</sup>. Kristof thereby argues in line with Invisible Children’s politics of any action is better than no action – like the undertone of one of Invisible Children’s slogans: “Don’t study history, make it”, calling its members to action.

We now have a clear understanding of how Invisible Children frames meaning for action, additionally we have seen why Invisible Children choose to frame its information in simple terms.

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<sup>41</sup> Finnström further adds that Invisible Children does not take the US geopolitical interest into account, as Uganda both is a country rich on national resources, and with neighbouring countries which have been terrorists safe places.

<sup>42</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c\\_Ue6REkeTA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_Ue6REkeTA) d.20.08.2013.

<sup>43</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/15/opinion/kristof-viral-video-vicious-warlord.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/15/opinion/kristof-viral-video-vicious-warlord.html?_r=0) d.20.08.2013.

However, taking the criticism into action it is less clear whether we can understand this framing as knowledge. This will be discussed in Chapter 5.

#### **4.6.2 Ugandan agency**

Another critique raised against the campaign is the missing representation of the Ugandan community and initiatives. Finnegan raises this point in her dissertation, as she states, "it seemed apparent that most US activist hadn't given much thought to the notion that there may be Ugandan activist or groups based in Uganda who were also working for very similar forms of social change pertaining to peace and human rights" (Finnegan 2011:107-108).

Keck and Sikkink focus on the process of which testimony is discovered and argue that the presented normally involves several layers of prior translation. They add, "There is frequently a huge gap between the story's original telling and the retellings (...) Local people, in other words, sometimes lose control over their stories in a translation campaign" (Keck&Sikkink 1998:19). This point can address the problematic of the missing Ugandan voice. Many critics see Invisible Children's narrative on Uganda as portraying its people as victim who lack agency, voice, will or power to act why it calls upon an external cadre of Invisible Children's members to liberate them by removing the bad guy who is causing their suffering.

Rosebell Kagumire, a Ugandan journalist and coordinator for 'Africans act for Africa' has raised this critique. She states, "This is another video of an outsider trying to be a hero rescuing our children. We have seen these stories a lot. It does not end the problem" (Rosebell 08.03.2012:2:50)<sup>44</sup>. She further adds, "How you tell the story of Africans is much more important than what the story is actually. Because if you are showing me as voiceless, as hopeless, you have no space telling my story, you shouldn't be telling my story if you don't believe that I also have the power to change what is going on, and this video seems to say that the power lies in America, and it does not lie with my government, it does not lie with local initiatives on the ground. That aspect is lacking. This is the problem. It is furthering that aspect of Africans, totally unable to help themselves and needing outside help all the time" (Rosebell 08.03.2012:3,22).

Another Ugandan, Teddy Ruge, the cofounder of the Project Diaspora, an online platform for discussing matters regarding development on the African continent, speaks more critically towards the campaign and development aid in Africa in general. He states, "It is a slap in the face to so many of us who want to rise from the ashes of our tumultuous past and the noose of benevolent, paternalistic, aid-driven development memes. We, Africans, are sandwiched between our historically factual imperfections and well-intentioned, road-to-hell-building-do-gooders. It is a

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<sup>44</sup> <http://rosebellkagumire.com/2012/03/08/kony2012-my-response-to-invisible-childrens-campaign/> d.02.08.2013.

suffocating state of existence. To be properly heard, we must ride the coattails of self-righteous idiocy train. Even then, we have to fight for our voices to be respected” (Ruge 18.03.2012)<sup>45</sup>.

Miller underlines this point when he talks about the remedial responsibility we have to help those in need. He states, “Not to respond to the needs of the famine victims would be a moral failure, a failure of respect. But it is also a failure of respect if we (...) treat people simply as passive recipients of our aid, and not as agents who are potentially able to take charge of their own lives” (Miller 2007:7). Miller thereby argues that even though we have a remedial responsibility to help those in need we equally have a responsibility to respect their agency. These critical statements show us that Invisible Children’s effort to stop Kony has a negative influence on the self-understanding of the Ugandans as it weakens their agency. Neera Chandhoke (2002) elaborates on this point as she argues, “People are disempowered rather than empowered when highly specialised, professional (...) civil society actors tell them what is wrong with their daily existence and how they should go about resolving the problems” (Chandhoke 2002:47).

In Finnegan’s fieldwork investigating in and around Gulu, she found that local northern Ugandan activists did not raise as strong a critique towards Invisible Children<sup>46</sup>. Many saw the growing interest in Uganda as a positive thing, a male, adult, Acholi activist stated, “For me, it is something positive, yeah, why? Because it means that the world knows our plight” (Finnegan 2011:145). In her dissertation, Finnegan showed how the Acholi population appreciated the attention created on their behalf, telling their story which the Ugandan government had silenced for decades. Invisible Children’s media served a function of recognition and validation of their suffering at the hands of both the Ugandan government and the LRA. It gave them hope and the feeling that they are not alone (Finnegan 2011:147). However, even though there generally where a positive view on the work of Invisible Children, the activists in Finnegan’s fieldwork still raised critical voices against Invisible Children’s simple storytelling on the history of northern Uganda. They articulated a concern about misunderstanding the conflict, in particular the role of the Ugandan government. Likewise Invisible Children’s military strategy as a solution raised concern. Instead of a military intervention, the Ugandan activists works for peace and human rights and are more concerned with developing and rebuilding the region and working towards a more equitable and dignified community for the present and future generations (Finnegan 2011:119). The activists see peace building, peace talks and reconciliation as the most desirable solution to end the conflict and reconcile the Acholi population.

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<sup>45</sup> <http://ugandaspeaks.com/2012/03/a-peace-of-my-mind-respect-my-agency-2012/> d.19.11.2013

<sup>46</sup> Finnegan conducted 22 semi-structured interviews with 29 Ugandans activists in northern Uganda, concentrated around Gulu town. Additionally she conducted five focus groups interviews, and did participatory of ethnography with three establish social movements (Finnegan 2011:284-285).

Thus in Finnegan's findings, we can understand that the Ugandan activists do not see a military strategy as a solution to the conflict. They rather see this as putting the population at further risk of attacks. Likewise, given the previous history, the Acholi population does not trust the Ugandan military not to harm the local community and therefore does not wish to give them the power or legitimacy to end the conflict.

Looking at Invisible Children's prognostic framing and the Ugandan activists desired next step, it stands as complete opposites. Where Invisible Children holds the LRA as the only responsible party for the war, the Ugandan activists also hold the Ugandan government responsible for failing or not wishing to cease the LRA's violence for over two decades. Where Invisible Children advocates for an end to the conflict through a military intervention, the Ugandan activists seek reconciliations and peace talks with the LRA and the Ugandan government.

As we saw above, social movements use local testimonies to strengthen their information framing, but listening to the critique of the Ugandans, certain historical aspects are missing from this framing. In Invisible Children's successful attempt to create awareness and activism towards Uganda, the Ugandan activist effort has been overshadowed. Additionally, Invisible Children's members hold relatively more power than the Ugandan activists and thus displace the effort of the Ugandan activists (Finnegan 2011:183).

This tension between the simple storylines and the lack of Ugandan agency, highlight important questions of responsibility. In which way can we hold Invisible Children responsible for the implications of its framing of meaning for action?

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have seen that Invisible Children frames meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign through its collective action frame, through the components diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing.

Through diagnostic framing, we found that Invisible Children is assigning blame and responsibility for the war in Uganda to Kony, framing him as pure evil, the northern Ugandans as innocent victims, and itself as American heroes, as portrayed through the three testimonies. Additionally, I argued that the diagnostic frame could be understood as an injustice frame as Invisible Children is framing the situation in Uganda as unjust.

Through prognostic framing, we saw that Invisible Children is articulating a military intervention as the only solution to stop the war in Uganda. Here, the American advocacy role is primarily to

leverage preselected celebrities and policymakers through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. This underlines the no wave-making activism I found in Chapter 3.

Through motivational framing, we found that Invisible Children call to arms through two central values, universalism and benevolence which is an expression of a moral cosmopolitanism that argues all human beings must be shown equal concern. This aspect also underlines the shared emotion work we saw in Chapter 3.

Lastly, I looked at the criticism towards the campaign, discussing how Invisible Children is oversimplifying the conflict and do not give any agency to the northern Ugandans and local initiatives and which implications this brings. This discussion raised important questions of knowledge and responsibility. I asked whether we could assign credibility to the campaign's framing of meaning for action thus understand it as knowledge which will be discussed in the following chapter. I also asked whether or not Invisible Children is responsible for the implications of the framing which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

# 5. Epistemology

In this chapter I will explore and answer the questions found in section 4.6.1, thereby answering the second question of the main research question: “*How can this framing of meaning for action be understood as knowledge?*”

Before turning to this I will introduce virtue feminist epistemology, and explain key concepts within epistemology. Using Nancy Daukas’ theory of epistemic trustworthiness (2006, 2011) *Epistemic Trust and Social Location* and *Altogether Now: A Virtue-Theoretic Approach to Pluralism in Feminist Epistemology*, I will analyse whether we can understand Invisible Children as epistemically trustworthy in its Kony2012 campaign, if it is not epistemically trustworthy in its framing of meaning for action then it is not to be trusted in its campaigning. I thereby examine whether we can understand the framing of information in the Kony2012 campaign as knowledge.

To get a more thorough understanding of the missing Ugandan voice in the Kony2012 campaign I will look into Miranda Fricker’s understanding of *Epistemic Injustice* (2011) and analyse whether this applies in the Kony2012 campaign.

## 5.1 Virtue epistemology

Virtue epistemology is a contemporary philosophical approach to epistemology that stresses the importance of intellectual (epistemic) virtues. Virtue epistemology emerged as an alternative to the internalism/externalism<sup>47</sup>, and foundationalism/coherentism<sup>48</sup> disputes, where virtue epistemology changes the expression for apprehending knowledge of the form “S knows that p”, by amending these formulas with virtue theory applied to intellect virtues. Virtues thus become the main focus for assessing knowledge.

Daukas argues that virtue epistemology is often understood as the epistemic analogue of virtue ethics as its approach is agent-centred, contrary to traditional epistemology that is principle-centred. She explains that, “principles-centered epistemology asks questions such as, ‘what criteria must a belief satisfy in order to constitute knowledge?’ and ‘what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for a belief to be justified?’, and agent-centered epistemology asks questions such as, ‘what does it mean to be a knower?’, or, ‘what is involved in being an excellent epistemic agent?’”

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<sup>47</sup> These concepts will be explained below.

<sup>48</sup> Foundationalism: The foundation for knowledge and justification is: 1) a persons immediate awareness of his or her own conscious states of mind, together with 2) his or her a priori grasp of self-evidently true propositions. Belief deriving from these two sources requires no further justification. Whereas the central claim of coherentism is that the sole basis for epistemic justification is relations among beliefs (rather than belief and some kind of foundation as the foundationalism refers to) – what justifies belief is the way they fit together: the fact that they cohere with each other (BonJour 2010:177,187).

(Daukas 2011:46). These questions are responded to in terms of epistemic virtues, understood as states of mind that disposes an agent to fulfil (or skilfully strive to fulfil) epistemic goals such as maximizing true beliefs, and minimizing false beliefs, acquiring significant knowledge, or developing significant understanding (Daukas 2011:46).

### **Internalism**

The fundamental claim of internalism is that epistemological issues arise and must be dealt with from within the individual person's first-person cognitive perspective, appealing only to things that are accessible from this standpoint (BonJour 2010:204). According to BonJour, the basic rational for internalism is that what justifies a person's beliefs must be accessible to her. Internal epistemic justification depends only on the matters which are within the cognitive grasp of the agent in question, it is matters that are accessible from within her first-person cognitive perspective (BonJour 2010:204). Other epistemic elements, such as testimony, are seen as indirectly available as a basis for justification; they can be established by reasoning from what is internally available (BonJour 2010:206).

According to Daukas, internalist virtue epistemology interprets virtues as enduring dispositional habits of mind required for responsible epistemic agency. Self-reflective epistemic agents deliberately develop virtues over time, motivated by an explicit desire for acquiring significant knowledge and understanding (Daukas 2011:47).

### **Externalism**

Opposite to internalism we find externalism. Externalists do not require that a belief need have any accessible cognitive support. Instead, externalists believe that epistemic justification can depend (entirely) on matters external to one's cognitive grasp. A belief might be justified for an agent if the causal process that led to its adoption is cognitively *reliable*. If the belief-producing process is reliable, then it will be objectively probable that the belief is equally reliable. Therefore such a process leads to a high proportion of true beliefs, where the degree of justification only depends of the degree of reliability (BonJour 2010:208-209).

According to Daukas, externalists define epistemic virtues as 'faculties' or 'mechanisms' (such as perception, memory, and inferential abilities) that reliably produce true beliefs, with no awareness or epistemic motivation on the part of the agent assumed or required (Daukas 2011:46-47)<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> Daukas herself is a weak reponsibilist/reliabilist hybrid, who takes epistemic trustworthiness to be the primary epistemic virtue around which others are organized (Daukas 2011:47).

### 5.1.1 Feminist virtue epistemology

Feminist epistemologists have investigated the role of gender and oppressed groups in knowledge production. They are in general motivated by a political project of eliminating the oppression of women, where the interest has been in how norms and practices of knowledge production affects the lives of women implicated in systems of oppression (Grasswick 2006:1). Feminist epistemologists seek to understand both *how* the social relations of gender shape our knowledge practises and how these relations *ought* to be relevant in knowledge practices, thus making it a normative project (Grasswick 2006:1-2).

Daukas generally characterizes feminist epistemology as grounded in the awareness that gender, and more generally, the ‘social location’ or ‘situatedness’ of the subject of knowledge, matters to knowledge of practices and production in contextually variable ways. She elaborates, “the ‘social location’ of the knowing subject matters to feminism and epistemology, in ways that may vary with different contexts of inquiry, and in ways that have powerful social/political consequences” (Daukas 2011:48).

### 5.2 Epistemic trustworthy agents

In this section I will give an introduction to Nancy Daukas’ (2006, 2011) theory of epistemic trustworthiness. Then I will analyse to what extent Invisible Children can be understood as a trustworthy agent.

According to Daukas, we function as epistemic agents in all aspects of our lives. Epistemic functioning often and perhaps always involves the exchange of epistemic goods; sharing testimonies<sup>50</sup> and a shared acceptance of the epistemic norms that guide the practices that yield those goods. Social functioning therefore requires epistemic cooperation and epistemic cooperation requires trust. The central discussion in this Chapter concerns what is required for an epistemic agent to be worthy of this kind of trust. This question is both concerned with moral character and the relation between moral character and social practices, as well as with epistemic character and the relation between epistemic character and social practices which Daukas understands as the *epistemic dimension of trustworthiness* (Daukas 2006:109).

Epistemic trustworthiness is both character-based and connected to truth. It holds epistemic agents accountable for their beliefs and responsible for the character of their epistemic interactions with others (internalism), and it requires epistemic virtues to reliably produce true beliefs and

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<sup>50</sup> Daukas understand all epistemic actions as exchange of testimonies, which differs from the testimonial understanding we saw in Keck & Sikkink’s Transnational Advocacy Network Theory. Their testimonial focus was on the personal testimony – ones personal story. When I am referring to testimony in this chapter, testimony is understood from Daukas definition.

understanding, thereby holding agents accountable to how things are (externalism) (Daukas 2011:50). Daukas argues that, “epistemic trustworthiness is socially inculcated, complex character-based, veritistic virtue that supervenes on a relation among first-order beliefs, and (often tacit) second-order beliefs about one’s own and others’ epistemic competencies” (Daukas 2006:109). First order beliefs are understood as one’s internal beliefs, and second order beliefs link individual epistemic agency to broader social practices, guiding the ways in which we present ourselves and ‘read’ others as epistemic agents (Daukas 2006:109, 2011:57). E.g. a member of Invisible Children’s first order beliefs in the encounter with the Kony2012 film could be that we have an obligation to help. The second other beliefs occurs in the interaction with the other members view of Kony2012 and because we would presume they match each other, then, the members can form a collective identity and engage in social practice with each other.

In order to investigate epistemic trustworthiness, I will make the general assumption, “that all participants in an epistemic community are morally trustworthy in the sense that they are benevolent, and they sincerely believe what they say, say what they sincerely believe, and behave consistently with those beliefs (when truth and understanding alone are the aim)” (Daukas 2006:110)<sup>51</sup>. Imagine that an epistemic agent S asserts that proposition P. Then it is in virtue of our assumption that S is morally trustworthy, as defined above, and that we experience her assertion not merely as providing the information that ‘S says that P’ but showing that ‘S believes that P’ (Daukas 2006:110). However, when engaging epistemically with S’s asserting that P, then Daukas argues, more than the assumption of moral trustworthiness is required. We must experience her assertion as a reason for us to believe that P or at least as a reason for us to consider the possibility that P be worth taking seriously (Daukas 2006:110).

This means that our starting point in the investigation of Invisible Children as a trustworthy agent is assuming that it is benevolent, that it sincerely believe the information it is providing in the campaign, and that it behaves consistently with this belief. We must also experience its assertion in the Kony2102 campaign as a reason for us to believe it or at least consider it as worth taking seriously.

According to Daukas, the example above is the normal practice of epistemic interaction and cooperation. It requires that members of an epistemic community typically make the presumption that other agents are credible. In making that presumption, we follow what Daukas considers to be an *epistemic principle of charity* (EPC) (Daukas 2006:110). The idea that a principle of charity is required for assessing credibility is based on Donald Davidson’s work in radical interpretation. Radical interpretation addresses the problem that it is only possible for me to assign meanings to

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<sup>51</sup> This premise will not be repeated, but is the foundation for the rest of the arguments in this Chapter.

your utterances by interpreting your linguistic behavior as meaningful, if I presume your utterance is true beliefs. This I cannot do without knowing what you believe which presumes that we share a body of beliefs. Davidson (1986) counsels us to interpret speakers as holding true beliefs (true by our light at least), that is to extend the epistemic principle of charity whenever it is plausible to do so (Daukas 2006:110, Davidson 1986).

If we consider a situation in which we self-consciously decide to engage in a given assessment conducted by Invisible Children, like the Kony2012 campaign. Then we would like to know whether or not Invisible Children would behave epistemically competent in asserting P, that is if Invisible Children would assert that P only if it has justified beliefs that P or whether it would not. If Invisible Children frequently and sincerely claims an epistemic authority that it does not possess, that is if Invisible Children makes the assessment of P that it does not have justified belief in, then it is not worthy of trust in an epistemic sense and we should not believe that P or seriously consider the possibility that P on the strength of its testimony alone. But if Invisible Children usually exerts epistemic authority only when it does possess it, then it is worthy of trust and we should believe that P or at least seriously consider that P on the strength of its testimony alone (Daukas 2006:110-111).

Summing up: “In extending that principle of charity to individual A, we presume that A generally (...) expresses epistemic authority when and only when in fact she possesses that authority. It follows that it is a necessary condition of effective and productive epistemic practice that participants be epistemically trustworthy (...), and that engaging in cooperative epistemic activities requires presuming that we, and those with whom we interact, are epistemically trustworthy” (Daukas 2006:111).

The ideal epistemic trustworthiness (ET) is defined as:

**ET (ideal):** A is epistemically trustworthy if and only if A is disposed to behave (when contextually appropriate) as though her epistemic status is S if and only if her epistemic status is S (Daukas 2006:111).

ET implies that an (ideally) epistemic trustworthy agent confidently asserts that P only if she knows that P, expresses doubt about P only if she has reason to doubt that P etc. (Daukas 2006:111)<sup>52</sup>. To this Daukas adds that when A asserts that P, the more implausible that P is or the more that is at stake in the question whether P, the higher degrees of trustworthiness is required of A, and the more confident we must be about the assertion before we are willing to accept her claims

<sup>52</sup> To this Daukas adds that none of us is perfect, and that any given individual will be more or less epistemically trustworthy, at a time, relative to a particular domain or subject matter. (Daukas 2006:111).

(Daukas 2006:111). Thus we would require Invisible Children to have a high degree of confidence in its assessment of the Ugandan history because, taken the seriousness of the criticism into account, there is a lot at stake in its assessment.

The above characterization of epistemic trustworthiness, ET (ideal), should therefore be qualified as follows:

**ET (qualified):** A is epistemically trustworthy in circumstances C with respect to domain D, if and only if A is disposed to behave as though A's epistemic status in C with respect to D is S if and only if A's epistemic status in C with respect to D is S. (Daukas 2006:112).

When we extend or withhold EPC, we express (some level of) confidence regarding the epistemic status of our beliefs concerning others' epistemic character and abilities. If we are to be epistemically trustworthy *that* confidence must be warranted, just as our confidence regarding our own epistemic status must be warranted. The degree of our own epistemic trustworthiness regarding propositions in domain D in a given situation depends not only on the accuracy of our assessment of our epistemic status with respect to D, it also depends on our assessment of the epistemic status of others in relation to D, and our level of confidence regarding that assessment (Daukas 2006:113). Thus epistemic trustworthiness is not only concerned with Invisible Children's assessment that P, but also includes the members who extent EPC to this assessment. If the members are to be epistemic trustworthy, their confidence in extending EPC to Invisible Children's assessment that P must be warranted. Daukas thereby broadens the spectrum of epistemic trustworthiness to not only focus on the assessment of the history of Ugandan in the Kony2012 campaign to also include those who trust it. When, and if, we chose to understand Invisible Children as trustworthy it also defines our own epistemic trustworthy character.

According to Daukas, epistemic trustworthiness is character-based from its relation to dispositions and traits. Daukas argues that traits like excessive diffidence, or excessive self-confidence will affect whether or not A remains unsure about P even after significant consideration, or very quickly comes to feel certain that P even without good reason. In either case, her epistemic trustworthiness is compromised. But if A is epistemically trustworthy to some reasonable degree, she will have developed a stable virtues character to which she is disposed to be confident to the degree appropriate to the circumstances (Daukas 2006:112-113).

We can therefore understand our character traits, also understood as virtues, as prerequisites for our epistemic trustworthiness. I will therefore investigate Invisible Children's character traits to analyse whether it is trustworthy or not.

### 5.2.1 Invisible Children as a trustworthy agent

According to Daukas, we develop our epistemic character through practice and habituation by internalizing norms that determines what degree of confidence is appropriate or what degree of epistemic deference or skepticism should be extended. Daukas understands this process as depending, in part, on learning to ‘read’ and respond to the epistemic statements we receive from others to whom we extend EPC. She states, “We form, test, and revise our epistemic conception of others and ourselves in part by checking our first order beliefs against theirs, in light of our conception of their epistemic characters, and what we sense to be their conceptions of our epistemic character” (Daukas 2006:114). To this Daukas adds, “We strive to bring our beliefs in line with the beliefs of those whom we trust and admire, and therefore those to whom we extend the epistemic principle of charity; we expect our beliefs to differ, and possibly deliberately distance them, from beliefs of those from whom we withhold the epistemic principle of epistemic charity. And of course the same is true of others as they interact with us” (Daukas 2006:114).

When applying this theory to Invisible Children’s *members*, we can understand them as still developing their epistemic character due to their young age. As we saw in section 3.3.1, the members share a common language, experiences, and understandings of the world. They also more or less have the same background and therefore share the same habituation and (to some extent) engaging in the same epistemic practice. As they share common beliefs and admiration, the members of Invisible Children can easily extend EPC to each other.

Invisible Children’s *founders* own personal descriptions, testimonies and appearance in each film serves to connect them with the members with whom they share similar demographical characteristics. Being the lead characters in the films and the head speakers of the campaign, the founders also become the main testifiers of Invisible Children’s beliefs to whom the members extend EPC.

Invisible Children’s *roadies* also serve as a key factor. As described in Chapter 3, their main purpose is to create awareness on behalf of Invisible Children thereby extending Invisible Children’s epistemic beliefs. And as we see in Section 3.4.2, the roadies help integrate solidarity and promote closeness in the movement as most members know a roadie personally which make them feel privy to Invisible Children’s beliefs and thereby more willing to extend EPC to them.

Taking Daukas’ theory into account, it then becomes clear why the different groups in Invisible Children easily extend EPC to each other as they share common demography, identity, and feelings in relation to the assessment of Invisible Children. But as I mentioned above, this is not enough in order to be epistemically trustworthy. A trustworthy ‘testifier’ needs to be sure only to claim that P

in circumstances where it is reasonable for it to believe that it has knowledge that P. And because Invisible Children's assessment P in the Kony2012 campaign focuses on the northern Ugandans history that underlines its prognostic framing; a military intervention, I will argue that there is a lot at stake in its assessment which is why it, according to Daukas, requires a high level of trustworthiness from Invisible Children. This raises the question of whether Invisible Children actually know or have good reason to believe the information it put forward in the Kony2012 campaign.

To examine this, I will look closer at the Kony2012 campaign. In section 4.3.1 we saw that Invisible Children enhances three testimonies in the Kony2012 campaign; the founder Jason Russell, his son Gavin, and the northern Ugandan Jacob. Through Keck and Sikkink we understood that the use of testimonies in campaigns was a way for social movements to frame information to make it seem more credible to the recipients. Additionally, the Kony2012 campaign is also drawing on a range of statements from experts, celebrities and local Ugandans to underline its advocacy. The lead expert character Luis Moreno Ocampo, the former head prosecutor for the ICC, appears several times in the video. Ocampo both underlines the necessity of arresting Kony and celebrates the work of Invisible Children. One of Daukas first assumptions was that we tend to trust testimonies as being true unless we have good reason not to. Building the campaign on personal testimonies and getting, what we assume to be, experts like Ocampo to support Invisible Children's advocacy makes it apparent why so many, at least at the first glance, extend EPC to Invisible Children.

If we look at the critiques towards Invisible Children, it mainly focuses on the ahistorical and depoliticising aspects of the campaign, referring to the missing historical and political aspect of the Ugandan story. Turning it around, the campaign is (almost) not criticized for the information it put forward, but for the information it did not share, did not know or did not think was important<sup>53</sup>. But as we saw in section 4.3.1, both western critics and northern Ugandans found the missing information relevant in order have a holistic understanding of the war in Uganda which is why they did not find Invisible Children to be epistemically trustworthy in the Kony2012 campaign.

Remembering Daukas' first premises, we should understand Invisible Children as honest and benevolent, therefore not choosing to hide important information in a bad faith. Invisible Children not asserting that P or missing that P in its testimony is related to *epistemic virtues* – whether Invisible Children possess the epistemic skills, abilities and attitudes which are required for successful P-related inquiries (Daukas 2011:51). Different epistemic virtues becomes important in different epistemic settings, and it is our ability to apply the correct virtues in the given setting that

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<sup>53</sup> This point is only referring to the historic assessments of Ugandan history in the Kony2012 campaign, not to the proposed solutions to it. I understand Invisible Children's proposed solutions to the conflicts as grounded in their historical account on the Ugandan history. This chapter will only concern their historical/epistemic assessments.

makes us trustworthy agents. In order to examine whether Invisible Children is a trustworthy agent I will look into its epistemic character and virtues. In order to do this I will divide Invisible Children into three groups; 1) the founders<sup>54</sup>, who first claimed P, 2) the members, who extent EPC to them, and 3) the roadies.

### The founders

To examine whether the founders' epistemic character are trustworthy, we need to examine their epistemic virtues. Daukas states that developing reliable and accurate virtues is no easy task and requires effort, "most obviously, being epistemically trustworthy requires the right degree of confidence with respect to one's salient beliefs under relevant kinds of circumstances" (Daukas 2011:51). The epistemic virtue of self-confidence should, according to Daukas, be tempered with the appropriate amount of humility and yet empowerment. Daukas states, "At a minimum, appropriately tempered epistemic self-confidence requires a finely-tuned ability to discern what features of different contexts are most salient to a given inquiry, what is required epistemically for a given inquiry in light of its context and goals, the degree to which one is, and is not, equipped to meet those requirements (and how), and how salient features of one's epistemic situation compare to, contrast with, or complement those of others" (Daukas 2011:52).

Looking at the founders confidence testimonies in the Kony2012 film, it seems as the founders have a high degree of self-confidence in their assessment that P, as they confidently assess the history of Uganda, diagnostically framed who is to blame, and present specific solutions to the problems in its prognostic framing. Looking at the critics toward the campaign, we can understand it as though they think the founders have a too high degree of self-confidence in their assertion that P which is keeping them from making the further required epistemic investigations, and thereby keeping them from asking the required questions to holistically understand the history of Uganda. The position the critics take is holding the founders epistemically responsible for the questions *they did not* pose, the information they did not share, and the aspects they did not integrate in their framing of meaning for action which is why the critics do not extend EPC to them and do not understand them as epistemically trustworthy agents.

Looking at the founder's goal with the campaign's collective action frame, it is clear that it was not to get a holistic understanding of the war but to create awareness as means to stop the war. Their answer to the critique are that a holistic epistemic investigation of the Ugandan history would paralyze us from taking action, thus putting action not epistemic trustworthiness into focus.

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<sup>54</sup> One could argue that the employees of Invisible Children, who also develop the campaigns and advocacy would be a part of this group in the division, but as they haven't been a central part of this thesis, I will leave them out of the discussion.

However, Daukas' theory of trustworthiness holds a truth component; the external reliabilist understanding requires epistemic agents to have true beliefs or at least justified beliefs in the assessment that P. Daukas would therefore reject the notion of epistemic advocacy to a create action without holding, at least, justified beliefs in its assertions in the Kony2012 campaign, especially when it is required that the founders have a high degree of trustworthiness on account of the seriousness of the implications its framing of meaning for action creates. Actions can be founded on basis of epistemic assessment, but Invisible Children cannot substantiate epistemic trustworthiness on the basic of action only<sup>55</sup>, at least not in a reliabilist understanding. According to Daukas, Invisible Children needs to have both internal and external justification for their belief, where the external understanding holds a truth component not related to action. I can therefore conclude, through Daukas theoretical frame of trustworthiness, that Invisible Children is not trustworthy in its assessment of the Ugandan history in the Kony2012 campaign.

### The members

In the section above it became clear why the members of Invisible Children easily extended EPC to the founders' epistemic assessment in the Kony2012 campaign. Through Daukas we also understood that when the members extend EPC, they also express confidence concerning the founders' epistemic character and abilities. In the understanding of epistemic trustworthiness the confidence in the founders' epistemic assessment must be warranted in order for the members to be trustworthy. But as we saw in the previous section, the founders is not trustworthy in their assessment that P, and I can therefore make the argument that the members are not trustworthy in extending EPC to the founders assessment in the Kony2012 campaign.

On the other hand, it can be questioned how high expectations we should have of the young members who are still just forming their epistemic character. As we can see, both here and in Chapter 4, the founders have gone to great length to make the video and campaign appear credible using personal testimony which we, in our everyday epistemic practice, take to be a source of knowledge. However, in light of the heavy amount of criticism of the campaign, one could argue that even though the members were warranted in extending EPC to the campaign at first glance, then, in order to be epistemically trustworthy the members have an epistemic duty to recognise the heavy amount of critiques towards the campaign and search for further information on the history of Uganda, on which they can form a thorough understanding. Not making this effort would mean that the members only rely on untrustworthy information in their epistemic understanding of the history of Uganda which also makes their understanding of the war in Uganda untrustworthy.

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<sup>55</sup> This aspect is further discussed in section 6.2.3

## The roadies

Similar to the members, we can understand why the roadies easily extend EPC to the founders' assessment. The difference between the roadies and the "ordinary" members is that the roadies are communicating the assessment of Invisible Children, and thus become a more integrated part of the founders' assessment because they transmit and advocate Invisible Children's beliefs. The roadies therefore need to be even more warranted in their confidence to the founders' assessment to be epistemic trustworthy. And as with the members, the roadies have an epistemic duty to recognise the heavy critique and in this light search for further information. In not making this effort the roadies, like the members, are not epistemically trustworthy in their understanding and assessment of the history of Uganda.

## 5.3 Epistemic injustice

In order to understand the northern Ugandans missing voice in the Kony2012 campaign, and the outrages it has created among some prominent Ugandan bloggers, we will look into José Medina's (2011) and Miranda Fricker's (2007) understanding of stereotypes and prejudice, and how these can create epistemic injustice towards certain stereotypical groups.

First I will introduce Medina's and Fricker's understanding of stereotypes and prejudice, and how these can affect the testimonial exchange between different stereotypical groups, when one group does not extend EPC to the other on account of prejudice. This will lead to a discussion of whether we can understand Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action as epistemic injustice towards the northern Ugandans.

### 5.3.1 Prejudice and stereotypes

Daukas argues that most epistemic agents have an internalized view of stereotypes regarding the cognitive and moral traits of a specific kind of people situated in a specific social setting. The stereotypes are typically understood as social group with one or more attributes that is used to generalize and distinguish them from other groups (Daukas 2006:114, Fricker 2007:30). Epistemic agents perceive, to a varying degree, individuals as members of groups and in virtue of that membership we more or less appropriately, *prima facie*, extend EPC. This because most everyday testimonial exchange require hearers to engage in social categorization of speakers which is why stereotypes are foundational for testimonial exchange (Fricker 2007:31). Fricker understands stereotypes in a neutral sense, where different stereotypes may or may not be reliable. To this she adds, "If stereotypes are widely held associations between a group and an attribute, then stereotyping entails a cognitive commitment to some empirical generalization about a given social group" (Fricker 2007:31).

Fricker is particularly interested in the link between unfairly biased credibility judgments and identity prejudices. Fricker defines prejudice as “judgment, which may have a positive or negative valence, and which display some (typically, epistemic culpable) resistance to counter-evidence owing to some affective investment on the part of the subject” (Fricker 2007:35). To this Fricker adds that negative identity prejudices are prejudice with a negative valence held against people because of their social group. When stereotypes are associated with false identity prejudice the stereotypes embody an unreliable empirical generalisation. When such a prejudice is a pre-judgement interpreted in an internalist vein, made or maintained without proper regard to evidence, then, we should perceive such prejudices as epistemically culpable (Fricker 2007:32-33). The negative and positive prejudices about a particular group circulating in a culture can denigrate or elevate the epistemic character of the members of that group affecting how they are perceived (Medina 2011:16).

Medina and Fricker argue that identity-prejudice are related to the assessments of epistemic authority that institute both *undeserved credibility deficits* and *undeserved credibility excesses*<sup>56</sup> (Medina 2011:16, Fricker 2007:17). When subjects receive undeserved credibility deficits they can be stigmatized by negative identity prejudices, and may not be regarded as normal epistemic subjects, and as reliable conveyors of information. They will therefore not receive proper recognition in their testimonial exchange. When epistemic agents tends to receive credibility excess from most interlocutors, they are likely to develop an epistemic arrogance which results in a range of epistemic virtues are moving out of their reach, rendering them closed-minded, dogmatic, blithely impervious to criticism etc. (Fricker 2007:20, Medina 2011:16).

Following this theory, I will argue that we can understand Invisible Children and their members as part of a dominant stereotypical group who receive credibility excess. The stereotypical group that Invisible Children has membership in is understood as the white American hero, who is saving innocent Africans from suffering, as we saw in section 4.3. According to Daukas, members of such a stereotypical group risk that they witness their role models treating members of other groups as epistemically inferior, in which case they may develop unwarranted confidence in their own epistemic abilities in relation to others. Where members of the less dominant stereotypical group such as the northern Ugandans, understood as the poor victim who needs to be saved, may come to have little confidence in their epistemological abilities because people who they perceive as

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<sup>56</sup> To this Fricker argues: “The primary characterization of testimonial injustice [...] remains such that it is a matter of credibility deficit and not credibility excess” (Fricker 2007:21), she offers two arguments for this claim: 1) she contends that a credibility excess does no immediate harm, even if it can have a cumulative unfair effect, and 2) she argues that a credibility excess on someone’s part cannot be automatically correlated with a credibility deficit in someone else’s part, for credibility is not a scarce good of which we have a finite and limited amount and, therefore, distributive fairness (i.e. getting an equal share) does not apply to this epistemic quality. This discussion is interesting, but not necessary to this thesis, why I will not go further into it.

authorities treat them as having credibility deficits (Daukas 2006:115). I will develop this argumentation as we go deeper into the analysis and understanding of epistemic injustice.

Fricker defines epistemic injustice as, “wherein a speaker receives an unfair deficit of credibility from a hearer owing to prejudice on the hearer’s part” (Fricker 2007:9). To this Fricker adds that testimonial injustice has to be systematic so to say that the prejudice towards a stereotypical group has to ‘track’ it through different dimensions and epistemic interactions (Fricker 2007:27).

According to Medina, “epistemic injustices (...) are created and maintained through a sustained effort over time and across interactions, and cannot, therefore, be confined to a single moment of testimonial exchange” (Medina 2011:17).

When looking at the Kony2012 campaign and the division of stereotypes I made above, I can ask whether the missing voice of the Ugandan, seen in section 4.6.2, is an expression of epistemic injustice towards the northern Ugandans. To explore this I will analyse a testimonial exchange between Invisible Children and the Ugandans. I understand the testimonial exchange between the two groups as 1) Invisible Children’s Kony2012 campaign, and 2) the Ugandan reaction to the campaign, this I will relate to the diagnostic injustice frame, seen in section 4.3, which I will argue can be understood as a situated understanding which may affect the testimonial exchange in direct or indirect ways.

### 5.3.2 Testimonial exchange and credibility

According to Daukas, we, in our everyday epistemic practice, take testimony of others to be a source of knowledge. We assign different amount of credibility and put different value on different testifiers/stereotypes in particular situations, stereotypes are likely to work their way into our background presuppositions and thereby lay the groundwork for the problem of epistemic exclusion. Daukas argues that, “We will be disposed to expect members of some groups to be more, or less, epistemically valuable than members of other groups, and those expectations will inflect our interpretation of their epistemic behavior, and our dispositions to extend, and withhold, the epistemic principle of charity to particular others” (Daukas 2006:115). We can understand the founders of Invisible Children as the primary testifier being the originators of the campaign and the northern Ugandans, the members, the critics etc. as the receivers of their testimony. The northern Ugandans reaction on the campaign is analysed as their testimonial response to Invisible Children.

Through Daukas, and as we saw in the previous section, Invisible Children as a stereotypical group is likely to extent EPC to itself and to groups whom it resemble, we also saw why the critics did not find Invisible Children trustworthy in its Kony2012 campaign. The northern Ugandans had a

similar reaction. In the section 4.6.2, we saw that the Ugandan bloggers Kagumire and Ruge had a very critical view of Invisible Children's assessment in the Kony2012 campaign. They understood Invisible Children's testimony as showing them as voiceless victims, and Invisible Children's representation of the northern Ugandans as paternalistic and neo-colonialistic. However, we also saw that other Ugandan activists did not raise as strong a critique because they appreciated Invisible Children creating awareness on their behalf, finding that Invisible Children's advocacy validated their suffering. It is clear that the Ugandan bloggers do not find Invisible Children trustworthy and are not willing to extend EPC to it, however, it is less clear whether the other Ugandan activists are willing to, to some extent, extend EPC to Invisible Children. Extending EPC to Invisible Children is equal to find it trustworthy in its assessment in the Kony2012 campaign. Looking closer at the Ugandan activists' utterance, they stated that even though they appreciate Invisible Children shining a light on their situation, they still raise concerned voices against the simple storytelling in the Kony2012 campaign which they understand as misunderstanding or a misinterpretation of the conflict. I will therefore argue that they do not find Invisible Children's assessment of the conflict trustworthy, and therefore do not extent the EPC to its assessment of the Ugandan history in the Kony2012 campaign, despite their appreciation.

According to Medina, credibility has an interactive nature; credibility judgments interrelate and are not always easily distinguishable or extricable from each other. She states, "Credibility never applies to subjects individually and in isolation from others, but always affects clusters of subjects in particular social networks and environments" (Medina 2011:18). Through Medina we can understand, that when the members and founders extend the EPC to each other they equally exclude extending EPC to the northern Ugandans, the critics, or other groups who holds a different epistemic understanding of the conflict in Uganda, because when they extend EPC to the founders assessment that P they understand this as truth or at least as a justified belief, why they cannot understand another contradictory assessment Q equally to be true or justified as it contradicts their first beliefs.

This epistemic exclusion is not of an unjust character, if Invisible Children assessment that P is not founded on a harmful stereotypical understanding of the northern Ugandans. Likewise Invisible Children's assessment is not stereotypical if Invisible Children is the only one having this view of the northern Ugandans, because, as we saw above, epistemic injustice is not founded on a single testimony but has to 'track' the stereotypical group.

As we saw in section 4.4 Invisible Children has been quite successful in its prognostic framing, spreading its advocacy through social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, starring in high profiled TV show and series such as Oprah and Veronica Mars, and having an

influence in president Obama passing the “Lord’s Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act”. When these different individuals are advocating on behalf of Invisible Children, then, we must expect that they understand Invisible Children’s assessment P as justified and therefore extend EPC to it. In doing this, they also assign a level of credibility to it that is disproportionate (because Invisible Children is not trustworthy). According to Medina, this can have some unfortunate consequences. She argues that by assigning a level of credibility that is not proportionate to the epistemic credentials shown by the speaker, the excessive attribution does a disservice to everybody involved: to the speaker by letting him get away with things, and to everybody else by leaving a crucial aspect out of the interaction (Medina 2011:18-19). Thus by uncritical distributing excessive credibility to Invisible Children’s assessment in the Kony2012 campaign they are also excluding crucial aspects of Ugandan history.

### 5.3.3 Stereotypical epistemic exclusion

We can now understand why the Ugandans have a missing voice in the Kony2012 campaign, but in order for this to be an expression of epistemic injustice, we need to investigate whether this credibility deficit is associated with false stereotypical identity-prejudice. In order to make this investigation I will look at Invisible Children’s collective action frame from Chapter 4. Through Snow and Benford we understood the collective action frame as a way for Invisible Children to construct meaning for action, and that the action frame simplified and condensed “the world out there” according to the campaign and to the target population’s cultural environment. Invisible Children thereby uses the action frame to advocate meaning for action through its framing of information which fits to the target audiences cultural understanding.

The diagnostic injustice frame in section 4.3, is an understanding of the northern Ugandans as poor victims who needs to be saved from the evil Joseph Kony by Invisible Children. To this we need to ask whether the injustice framing is just an expression of Invisible Children’s understanding of the Ugandans or whether it is a general understanding of Africans.

Benford and Snow state that “A plethora of studies call attention to the ways in which movements identify “victims” of a given injustice and amplifying their victimization.” (Benford&Snow 2000:615). To this they add, “injustice frames are commonplace” (Benford&Snow 2000:615), thus such victimizing injustices frames are normal practices and not just an expression of Invisible Children’s stereotypical understanding. Additionally through Plewes and Stuart (2007) we can understand that it is not only Invisible Children who holds this understanding of Ugandans or more general Africans as victims. Bonny Ibhawoh, an assistant professor of history in Ontario sees the same understanding with his students, when he ask them what comes to mind when thinking about Africa, he always get same the answers, “Tarzan, (king of the jungle); famines and starving

children; wars and conflicts; dictators and corrupt governments; slaves and slavery” (Plewes&Stuart 2007:25). Plewes and Stuart argue that, “These images portray people as helpless victims, dependent, and unable to take action; they convey a sense that development problems can only be solved by Northern charity” (Plewes&Stuart 2007:24). They refer to this as “pornography of charity” and argue that it can have a serious negative impact on Africa’s possibilities for development. Thus it seems therefore safe to argue that Invisible Children’s framing of injustice in the Kony2012 campaign is representative of the overall framing of victims in Africa.<sup>57</sup> Epistemic agents who assign credibility to Invisible Children also hold the understanding that Invisible Children can, and should save the poor victimized Ugandans. Additionally the Ugandan bloggers response to Invisible Children can be understood as rejected Invisible Children’s framing of them as poor voiceless victims, asking them to respect their agency.

Based on these arguments, and given the heavy critique against this aspect I will argue that Invisible Children understands the northern Ugandans through a stereotype based on unreliable prejudice. This stereotypical view with false negative prejudice of the northern Ugandans (an Africans in general) as helpless victims is generated and supported by Invisible Children and the agents who distribute credibility to it. I will therefore argue that the northern Ugandans are experiencing epistemic injustice by Invisible Children.

Our first assumption in this chapter was that Invisible Children is benevolent and only have good intentions. Looking at the movement’s advocacy, its only goal is to help the northern Ugandans by bringing Kony to justice. It therefore seems strange that it would build its campaign upon harmful unreliable prejudice. According to Fricker, prejudices are difficult to detect especially for the one who holds them. Fricker states, “The idea is rather that prejudice will tend surreptitiously to inflate or deflate the credibility afforded the speaker, and sometimes this will be sufficient to cross the threshold for belief or acceptance so that the hearer’s prejudice causes him to miss out on a piece of knowledge” (Fricker 2007:17). She adds, “Certainly we may sometimes perpetrate testimonial injustice because of our beliefs (...) we may very frequently do it in spite of them” (Fricker 2007:36). To illustrate this, Fricker gives an example with a boy, Solomon who lives in a small isolated farming community who in general believe that women are not half as competent as men in relation to abstract thinking. He had never met a woman who went in for abstract thinking, but met men of this sort. In this situation the boy could not be accused of any unreliable prejudice. But now he goes off to the university, where he studies alongside able women. Then Fricker argues, “If it does not shift the belief, however, then the beliefs is revealed as irrational, and moreover as a prejudice: the stubbornness of Solomon’s belief in the face of manifest counter-evidence would at

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<sup>57</sup> This argument is further developed throughout Chapter 6.

once reveal him as both epistemically and ethically flawed" (Fricker 2007:34). Thus we may have excused Invisible Children's unreliable prejudice if it had not been confronted with evidence that contradicted it. But as we have seen in the previous chapters, Invisible Children has. Additionally when advocating on behalf of others, as I have argued earlier, Invisible Children has a greater responsibility for having true beliefs not built on unreliable prejudice against those it is advocating on behalf of. In doing this, Fricker argues, it is ethically flawed.

We could imagine, though, that Invisible Children would argue that it was not itself who holds this prejudice, and that it was just an expression its of framing meaning for action. In this scenario I would still argue, that Invisible Children's framing of information is ethically flawed as it creates and stimulate unreliable stereotypes which its members and other who find Invisible Children trustworthy understands as true. Thus this stereotypical understanding of the northern Ugandans becomes an expression of justified beliefs among the supporters of Invisible Children.

### Implications

This stereotypical generalization has some serious implications for the northern Ugandans as epistemic agents. Fricker argues that when a person is being subject to epistemic injustice through her stereotype, it harms her in a primary and secondary way.

The *primary harm* is that the subject is wronged in her capacity as a knower, according to Fricker, this is in accordance to being wronged in a capacity essential to human value. Fricker states, "The fact that the primary injustice involves insults to someone in respect of a capacity essential to human value lends even its least harmful instances a symbolic power that adds a layer of harm of its own: the epistemic wrong bear a social meaning to the effect that the subject is less than fully human" (Fricker 2011:32). Fricker argues that this dehumanizing, if it is expressed before others, can cause a profound humiliation. We can understand this humiliation, as what the northern Ugandans bloggers are reacting to in section 4.6.2 with statement like "it's a slap in the face" and "you shouldn't be telling my story if you don't believe that I also have the power to change what is going on".

The *secondary harm* is related to how epistemic injustice can have a wide-ranging of negative impacts on a person's life. The purely epistemic consequence is, as I have argued above, that the agent who receives testimonial injustice may lose confidence in her epistemic agency in general. These views are exactly what the Ugandan bloggers are reacting on and against - refusing to be seen as voiceless victims, not having any say or power to change their situation. Thus these blog-posts can be understood as an effort to get their epistemic agency and assessment about their own history respected.

## 5.4. Conclusion

In this Chapter I discussed whether the framing of information in the Kony2012 campaign is understandable as knowledge, and whether the diagnostic injustice framing of the northern Ugandans as helpless victims is an expression of epistemic injustice towards them.

Through Daukas epistemic framework of trustworthiness, I discussed whether we could assign trust to the epistemic assessments made by the founders, the members, and the roadies of Invisible Children. Looking at the *founders'* testimonies it became clear that they had a too high degree of self-confidence in their epistemic character which is keeping them from making the further necessary epistemic investigation to get a justified understanding of the history of Uganda. However, the founders' goal with the collective action frame is not to get a holistic, epistemic understanding of the history of Uganda, but to create awareness to motivate actions, but this could not justify the lack of information in the Kony2012 campaign. However, we can question whether promoting more good and reducing harm to the northern Ugandans is more important than epistemic trustworthiness and whether such goal can excuse Invisible Children's epistemic behaviour. This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

When the *members* and the *roadies* extended EPC to the founders' assessment in the Kony2012 campaign they equally assigned confidence in the founders' epistemic trustworthiness. Through Daukas, we understood that in order for the members and roadies to be epistemic trustworthy that confidence needed to be warranted. However, because the founders assessment was not trustworthy, and because the members and roadies easily, on account of the heavy criticism, could have sought additional information, they are also epistemic untrustworthy in their extension of EPC to the founders testimonies in the Kony2012 campaign.

Lastly, I argued that Invisible Children's framing of meaning of action is founded on an unreliable stereotypical prejudice towards the northern Ugandan, understanding them only as innocent victims. This has some unfortunate implications as such prejudice wrongs the northern Ugandans in their capacity as knowers which, according to Fricker, equals being wronged in a capacity essential to human value. Additionally, we could understand the Ugandans bloggers testimony from section 4.6.2 as a critic towards this epistemic injustice. This implication will further discussed in Chapter 6.

# 6. Responsibility

In this chapter I will discuss the implications of Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign, and the responsibility it has for these. This is done to answer the last part of the main research question: *in which way can Invisible Children be held responsible for the implication of such framings?*

I will start the discussion by summing up from the previous chapters, bringing responsibility into context with the central questions I found during the analysis in the thesis. Then I will discuss how we can hold Invisible Children responsible for the implications of its framing. This is done by first distinguishing between three concepts of responsibility: outcome, remedial and epistemic responsibilities, through Lorraine Code (1987) *Epistemic Responsibility* and David Miller (2007) *National responsibility and Global Justice*, and afterwards by discussing how Invisible Children can be held responsible for the implications of its framing of meaning for action in its Kony2012 campaign.

## 6.1 A feeling of responsibility

Returning to the first meeting with the members' collective identity and shared emotions in Chapter 3, and remembering my own personal feeling when I first watched the Kony2012 video, I, as the members, experienced a complex bundle of emotions. The first emotion was sympathy with the northern Ugandans and feeling an obligation to do something. According to David Miller (2007) we can understand such people as the northern Ugandans, as being below some absolute line of poverty and suffering that we tend to recognise. Furthermore, the harm they are suffering has not come from the hand of nature, but directly or indirectly from other human beings – this fact gives room for not only feeling sympathy but also anger. Anger at the people who have done this or who have let it happen to the northern Ugandans, questioning: *why is this happening? What is producing this misery, and what should we be doing about it?* (Miller 2007:2).

In Chapter 3, I found that Invisible Children has been very successful in creating collective identities and emotions among its members based on these kinds of feelings and reflections. In Chapter 4, I analysed how Invisible Children frames meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign. Through the component diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing I analysed how Invisible Children is framing these feelings as questions of responsibility: Invisible Children is using injustice framing to showcase the victimhood of the northern Ugandans, Kony as the evil who caused the harm, and itself as the hero who can save them through leveraging pre-selected US based celebrities, and politicians on social media platforms. Additionally, in Chapter 4 we saw that

Invisible Children emphasizes moral cosmopolitan values of universalism and benevolence to give its members a feeling of a global responsibility to act. This global responsibility is based on sympathy for the victim and anger towards Kony and the LRA, who Invisible Children blame for all the northern Ugandan's suffering. This frame obliterates all other emotions and gives a simplistic response to remedy the northern Ugandan's suffering. Additionally it argues that everyone who encounters the Kony2012 campaign can and should remove the cause of the northern Ugandan's suffering, namely Kony, by engaging with Invisible Children.

Miller argues that when we respond to people caught up in atrocities, we should find ourselves pulling in two different directions, “On one side, we are inclined to see them simply as victims, people in other words to whom things as happened that they are powerless to resist. Our concern is with what has been done to them, with the deprivation and suffering that they have to bear. On the other side, we are also inclined to see them as agents, as people who make choices that have implications either for themselves or for others” (Miller 2007:5). According to Miller, we ask questions of responsibility when we ask whether the deprivation and suffering are self-inflicted, inflicted by others, or caused in some other way (Miller 2007:5).

In the following section I will present the three components of responsibility that I will use to discuss whether and how Invisible Children is responsible for the implications of its framing of meaning for action in the Komy2012 campaign.

## 6.2 Outcome, Remedial and Epistemic Responsibility

In this section I will explain the three different responsibility components I use to discuss whether and how Invisible Children is responsible for its framing of meaning for action. These are based upon David Miller (2007) and Lorraine Code (1987) concepts of responsibility.

A traditional agent focused<sup>58</sup> moral responsibility holds three elements: 1) individualism, human beings are primary bearers of responsibility, 2) distinction between positive and negative duties, including an understanding that it is worse to inflict directly harm than to inflict indirectly harm, or fail to prevent it, and 3) importance is attributed to special obligations such as family and friends (Moore 2008:507). Additionally, Miller distinguishes between two primary forms of responsibility: 1) *Outcome responsibility*, the responsibility we bear for our actions and decisions, and 2) *Remedial responsibility*, the responsibility we have to aid those in need.

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<sup>58</sup> Miller focuses his theory of responsibility on institutional or state responsibility, hence collective responsibility, however Miller's point of departure is discussing his distinction of responsibility from an agency point of view which I will focus on.

Code's theoretical framework of *epistemic responsibility* focuses on which epistemic beliefs we are responsible for making. I will use Code's theoretical framework to argue that epistemic responsible is a part of outcome responsibility as our actions and decisions are based on our epistemic inquiry. This gives Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action a central focus in this analysis because this meaning-making is epistemic matters, as shown in Chapter 5.

In addition to the distinction between remedial and outcome responsibility, Miller distinguishes between two notions of responsibility: 1) *identifying responsibility* is a matter of seeing who, if anybody, meets the conditions for being responsible, and 2) *assigning responsibility* involves a decision to attach certain costs or benefits to an agent, whether or not the relevant condition is fulfilled (Miller 2007:84), thus assigning a responsibility to "make things right", even though it was not necessarily her fault it went wrong.

We can understand Invisible Children's aim as *assigning remedial responsibility* to itself and everyone who encounters the campaign to relieve the northern Ugandans of their suffering, and the aim of this chapter as *identifying* Invisible Children's *outcome responsibility* for its framing of meaning for action in its Kony2012 campaign.

I will start the discussion by looking at outcome responsibility, and investigate in which ways Invisible Children can be outcome responsible for its actions and epistemic inquiry in the Kony2012 campaign. In order to make this discussion, I will show how epistemic and outcome responsibility is interlinked, but need to be assessed individually. Afterwards I will look at remedial responsibility, and how Invisible Children uses this understanding of responsibility in its advocacy. This will lead to a discussion of the implications of Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action, and what kind responsibility Invisible Children has for these implications.

### **6.2.1 The responsibility of beliefs**

This sections focuses on the how outcome and epistemic responsibility is interlinked but still need to be assessed individually, this because I want to distinguish between Invisible Children's epistemic responsibility in its framing of meaning for actions, and the responsibility it has for the outcome of such framings - discussing Invisible Children's responsibility in both aspects.

According to Lorraine Code (1987) it is difficult to distinguish between epistemic and moral<sup>59</sup> responsibility because, "knowing well, preserving an appropriate degree of objectivity, thinking

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<sup>59</sup> Miller distinguishes between moral and outcome responsibility, as he argues that outcome responsibility is a prerequisite for being morally responsible. If the outcome of an action is connected to any kind of obligation, we are morally responsible for the outcome and can be assigned moral praise or blame. When Invisible Children takes upon itself to remedy the situation for the northern Ugandans it accepts a moral obligation and can be blamed or praised for its actions. I will therefore not distinguish between the two concepts of responsibility.

clearly, and being epistemically responsible are, in fact, moral matters. But they are not *just* moral matters; nor can they, as moral matters, be wholly subsumed under standard modes of ethical discussion” (Code 1987:68).

Code argues that moral matters have a central epistemic core, in the sense that when a moral judgment is made two parts of the related context must be assessed: the way the situation is apprehended, and the way the action is performed as a result of the former. Thus Code argues that the former is a matter for epistemological assessment and the latter can, through Miller, be understood as outcome responsibility - the former is related to Invisible Children’s diagnostic framing in section 4.3 and the latter is related to the implications this framing has on the northern Ugandans. The moral dimension of the situation is crucially dependent upon the epistemic component, as it underlines the choice of action (Code 1987:69).<sup>60</sup>

To demonstrate the link between outcome and epistemic responsibility, Code gives an interesting example of a ship-owner: an owner of an unseaworthy ship had convinced himself that his ship was in fact seaworthy by selecting, emphasising, and ignoring evidence until he could honestly claim to believe in its seaworthiness. When he sent the ship to sea it went down. Code argues, that we can obviously state that he had no right or that he was epistemically irresponsible in believing the evidence on which he based his beliefs and performed his actions, no matter the outcome. If the incidence had resulted in the loss of life, we could state that, on consequential outcomes alone, the situation called for purely moral pronouncement. Thus Code argues that it is *because* of his epistemic irresponsible behaviour that the ship-owner was outcome responsible for his actions. We can therefore separate the epistemic and outcome responsibility, where the epistemic strands of the situation can and should be evaluated in its own terms as it function as the basis for the chosen action (Code 1987:72-73).

The example is comparable to Invisible Children’s Kony2012 campaign. Within the framing of meaning for action is an understanding of information framing where the social movement select, emphasise, and punctuate certain information and interpret local testimonies to fit a chosen action frame, hence it is Invisible Children’s epistemic assessment in the framing of information that grounds its advocacy, and thereby its action. It is therefore important to assess whether Invisible Children can be held responsible for the epistemic processes of framing meaning for action and for the implications this framing has created.

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<sup>60</sup> According to Code, the standard approach to ethical questions proceed from the tacit assumption that all moral agents perceive and understand situations in precisely the same way which creates a confusion that tends to obscure a complexity that must be acknowledged. She argues, that there is little reason to assume such commonality, “Human intellects and sensibilities are not blank, mass-produced (and hence identical) screens upon which situations simply register in exactly the same way. Different cognitive capacities and epistemic circumstances create situations where experiences are structured, and hence the world is known, quite differently from one cognitive agent to another” (Code 1987:69).

I will discuss the epistemic, outcome and remedial responsibility separately. First I introduce outcome responsibility and then discuss in which aspects Invisible Children can be outcome responsible

### **6.2.2 Outcome responsibility**

In this section I will discuss whether and how Invisible Children is responsible for the outcomes of the implications its framing of meaning for action has created. First I will elaborate further on the concept of outcome responsibility which will be used in the discussions in the following sections.

According to Miller, being outcome responsible has a causal component, meaning that the agent must have contributed to producing the outcome of a given situation<sup>61</sup>. Thus what is required to be outcome responsible for a situation is a foreseeable connection between the action and the result. This also means that the causal chain of action, the action which lead to a result which again led to another result, matters for attribution of responsibilities; as the chain becomes longer the responsibility dissipates. (Miller 2007:88). Additionally, an agent cannot claim outcome responsibility for a good but fluke result, because, Miller argues, there has to be a connection between my personal capacities and the result for outcome responsibility to obtain. In case of actions creating bad results, the criterion for outcome responsibility is that the result must be one that a person with normal capacities could have avoided producing (Miller 2007:88,96), we would therefore expect a person to be aware of her shortcomings and capacities in the actions that the agent takes. A natural requirement for an agent to be outcome responsible for an action is therefore that the agent is able to foresee the consequences of what she did or failed to do (Miller 2007:96). As Miller states, "in interpreting this condition we have to steer a mid-course between, on the one hand, asking what the particular person in question could have foreseen, given his actual capacities and state of mind, and on the other asking what was foreseeable in principle, given complete knowledge of the circumstances in which the action occurred" (Miller 2007:96).

In order to discuss Invisible Children's outcome responsibility for the implications of its framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign, I investigate whether the implications was predictable, thus whether Invisible Children could foresee that the actions and decisions it undertook was likely to have the consequences that it did.

In Chapter 5, I argued that the founders of Invisible Children are too confident in their epistemic assessment of the history of northern Uganda. Additionally in section 5.3.3 we saw that Invisible

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<sup>61</sup> Even though there is a close relation between outcome and causal responsibility, Miller still distinguishes between the two, as causal responsibility is invoked when a situation occurs, and we ask why and what the cause of this situation was, thus human agency has no special status in causal responsibility (Miller 2007:86-87). I will not, however, go into this discussion.

Children's injustice framing is built upon unreliable stereotypical prejudice which can be very hard to detect as they may inflate surreptitiously in spite of our epistemic intentions. This may be used as argument to state that Invisible Children could not have foreseen the implications of its framing as it is not consciously aware of the prejudice that it holds against the northern Ugandans. However, taking the heavy amount of criticism into account and considering the consequence that is at stake in its framing it demands for a high degree of confidence. And as we saw in section 5.2, we would expect Invisible Children to acknowledge the criticism against it and try to alter its epistemic beliefs to get a more profound understanding of the history of northern Uganda.

To this Miller states, that we are expected to be aware of our shortcomings which is why Invisible Children is expected to challenge its prejudice towards the northern Ugandans or avoid situation where such prejudice may create harm. Thus I will argue that Invisible Children could, or should have foreseen the implications of its framing of meaning of action and therefore is outcome responsible for them.

However, there are cases where we want to relieve an agent of the outcome responsibility. To this Miller gives several examples, most interesting for us is the example of manipulation. Cases of manipulation entail a person A inducing B to do something she would not otherwise have done by distorting B's process of decision. Miller gives three simple examples of this: B is acting on false information from A, A planting reasons for a certain action in B's head, or A persuading B to do something she might not otherwise have done (Miller 2007:92).

According to Moore (2012) the nature of social movement's advocacy can be understood as manipulation<sup>62</sup>, this because social movements knowingly frame information to fit a certain line of action. Social movements use such framing of meaning for action to persuade or plant certain raisons for specific actions that directs the members' "call to arms". We can therefore question whether the founders are manipulating the members of Invisible Children.

In cases of manipulation the unknowing actor B's control and responsibility passes to the manipulator A. Thus if this is the case with invisible Children's members and founders, we can excuse the members outcome responsibility. However, to escape responsibility B must meet certain standards: she must not be unusually gullible, for instance. Additionally, the responsibility can pass back to B if she was responsible for getting into the situation where she is manipulated. Even though the members of Invisible Children experience some sort of manipulation through the framing of meaning for action, they are not relieved of their outcome responsibility because they

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<sup>62</sup> As Moore states, "By its very nature, advocacy is meant to manipulate (...) often, as in Kony2012, advocates are trying to create popular support to pressure policymakers to enact a specific agenda" (Moore 2012:101).

themselves has chosen to get involved with Invisible Children. Additionally we saw in Section 5.2.1, the members of Invisible Children should have made a more thorough epistemic inquiry of Invisible Children's framing of the history of Uganda before extending EPC to them.

Summing up, Invisible Children is outcome responsible for the implication of the framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign. Additional the members could not be relieved of their outcome responsibility, even though the founders' advocacy could be understood as a form of manipulation.

We now turn to questions of epistemic responsibility and whether Invisible Children is epistemically responsible for its framings in the Kony2012 campaign.

### **6.2.3 Epistemic responsibility**

In this section, I will discuss how we can be responsible in our epistemic assessments, thus whether we can be held epistemically responsible for our beliefs. This is done to discuss whether and how Invisible Children can be held responsible for its epistemic assessments of the Ugandan history in the Kony2012 campaign on which it base its prognostic framing.

Code argues that, "There is a considerable degree of freedom in knowledge; hence, an adequate explication of human knowledge must give scope and grant responsibility to subjective factors that structure the process of knowledge acquisition, while preserving an ideal of objectivity, of realism normatively construed" (Code 1987:77). Code draw on Michael Stocker (1982) to make this argumentation. She starts the discussion by arguing that, "Stocker makes a good, convincing case for his conclusion: "if we can be responsible and active for various sorts of interesting and important physical acts, we can be responsible for mental goings-on, including beliefs"" (Code 1987:83).

Opponents to this view use standard examples which states that we must ineluctably know its Friday simply because it is Friday. It cannot be a choice, so the notion that there could be a choice concerning knowledge and beliefs looks ludicrous. They further add that belief differ from action in that it cannot involve choice and therefore cannot be something for which we can be held responsible. This would mean that we are wholly passive in regard to our beliefs which is why no attribution of responsibility is warranted (Code 1987:84).

Code argues for a middle position, stating that denying the active nature of a belief is misleading. According to Code this position glosses over procedures such as information gathering that led to belief formation, and fails to consider such acts as paying attention in assessing and judging the information. To this Code adds that, "No one would deny that people are responsible for these and

other activities that commonly lead to, contribute to, or accompany beliefs. If belief is part of, or outcome of, any or all of these activities, it seems indefensible to deny that one can be held responsible for it” (Code 1987:85). Thus Invisible Children is, according to Code, epistemic responsible for its information gathering and beliefs formation, hence Invisible Children’s framing of meaning for action. As we saw in Chapter 5, the argument against seeing Invisible Children as an epistemically trustworthy agent was that it is too self-confident in its information assessing where it fails to realise other important aspect of the history of Uganda. Thus the discussion of Invisible Children’s trustworthiness is related to assessing and judging information of which it, according to Code, can be responsible.<sup>63</sup>

Code gives an interesting example of the Flat Earth Society to demonstrate why behaving epistemic responsible is important. Code gives the example of a society who believes the earth is flat which, Code argues, may seem, *prima facie*, to be morally harmless both to the members and others. It would be conceivable that members of this society would be as morally good as the most demanding standards would require, however, they could still be judged epistemically irresponsible for their beliefs on the basis of insufficient and contradictory evidence, on which they are claiming knowledge. In this aspect they are not taking available evidence sufficiently into account and therefore not being epistemic responsible (Code 1987:73).

Comparing this to Invisible Children, we can also understand it as a movement that, as I discussed in Chapter 5, holds specific knowledge or beliefs about the history of Uganda which I have analysed to be untrustworthy, and therefore epistemically irresponsible. However, without reflecting heavily on the means and tactics it uses to frame information in its campaigning, we could understand it as generally morally good, as it focus on moral cosmopolitan values of universalism and benevolence, understanding human beings as having a moral responsibility to help those in need. Thus at first glance we could understand Invisible Children’s campaigning as morally upright, assigning remedial responsibility to aid the Ugandans to itself, the members, as well as everyone else that encounters Invisible Children’s media.

Code goes deeper into the example by stating that the Flat Earth Community’s irresponsible epistemic behaviour both has private and public implications. The private implication is that we may regard a flat-earth believer as an unreliable source of information because her epistemic

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<sup>63</sup> Code limits the domain of epistemic responsibility to the members performed in the acquisitions of beliefs, while denying that an ensuring belief falls within the domain of epistemic responsibility, she states: “clearly I am not responsible for being alive or being the age I am - but there are conditions for which I, just as clearly, am and have been active and responsible – for being a philosopher, for being a parent, for being bilingual.” (Code 1987:87). Code therefore concludes, that there is an element of freedom in both action and beliefs: “that we can sometimes choose when or what to believe; but often there is no choice.” (Code 1987:90).<sup>63</sup> It is, however, not relevant for us to determine exactly which beliefs we can be responsible for, because, as we have seen above, we are responsible in our epistemic behaviour regarding information gathering and assessment on which we build beliefs.

convictions make us hesitate to understand her as trustworthy which may affect her intellectual character, as we have seen in Chapter 5. More interesting for us, however, is the public implication. Code states that it would pose both moral and epistemic concern if a flat-earth believer was in a position to grant or withhold funds for space research (Code 1987:75), as a flat-earth believer, because of her irresponsible belief's, would create morally culpable judgements in relation to her position as she would grant the funds based on epistemically irresponsible judgements.

Turning back to the case of Invisible Children, then, we can raise moral concern regarding its position as development and advocacy actors because it acts on the basis of epistemically irresponsible beliefs. Code states that the highest degree of epistemic irresponsibility attaches to acts that is led by unwarranted and unjustifiable beliefs. Meaning people who are wont to believe things for which the evidence is scanty or who systematically dwell upon evidence that support an unreliable proposition and avoid exposure to evidence that might put them in doubt (Code 1987:90). As we have seen in Chapter 5, this is comparable to Invisible Children's epistemic behaviour and I can therefore argue that Invisible Children is epistemically irresponsible in its framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign.

However, Code argues, that despite the centrality of having justified beliefs for human wellbeing, epistemic claims are not absolute nor are epistemic duties sternly uncompromising. She states, "All else being equal, it is better to know, but often, in human experience, all else is not equal. These moral and epistemic concerns, then, are nor perfectly distinct or distinguishable from one another" (Code 1987:70). To this Code adds that there can be situations where we need to believe in the value of a task or a project which may justify a redirecting of epistemic practice. Such practices could not count as *epistemic* justifications, however, one could argue that prudential, practical, or moral considerations override epistemic ones if the former are judged more pressing (Code 1987:70). Understanding the nature of social movements advocacy as manipulation and accepting it as an essential element of how social movements frame meaning for action to make a morally problematic situation entail less harm and more good, then, one could argue that doing good is more pressing than behaving epistemically responsible. This is in fact what Invisible Children is arguing by stating that "nuances paralyze us" and that "action is better than no action" as we saw in section 4.6.1.

Thus we need to look at remedial responsibility, asking whether Invisible Children is neglecting their epistemic responsibility in favour of a remedial responsibility and thereby promotes more good than harm to the northern Ugandans in the Kony2012 campaign. If this is the case, it could excuse its irresponsible epistemic behaviour.

### **6.2.4 Remedial responsibility**

In section I will discuss David Miller's remedial responsibility in relation to Invisible Children's advocacy. According to Miller, remedial responsibility applies when we encounter a situation in need of remedy. The need of remedy is owed to a person or a group who are unjustifiably deprived in a way that makes them fall below some threshold in terms of material resources, or that are in danger or distress, as with the northern Ugandans. Miller defines remedial responsibility as: "to have a special responsibility, either individually or along with others, to remedy the position of the deprived or suffering people, one that is not equally shared with all agents; and to be liable to sanction (blame, punishment, etc.) if the responsibility is not discharged" (Miller 2007:99). Thus, central to remedial responsibility is that we find it morally unacceptable that a deprived person is simply left to suffer which is why some capable agent or agents have or are given an obligation to act in way that remedies the situation.

When looking at a case of remedial responsibility such as with the northern Ugandans, then, Miller would argue, that no one is formally assigned the responsibility to aid them from the atrocities conducted by Kony<sup>64</sup>, this because Kony himself is outcome responsible which Invisible Children underlines in its diagnostic framing. In this perception, I can argue, through Miller, that Kony also have a remedial responsibility to remedy the situation for the northern Ugandans. However, Invisible Children is not advocating for this point, as it is not trying to make Kony act in certain ways, it is simply trying to capture him. In this perspective Invisible Children deprives Kony from his remedial responsibility, and thereby removes his agency, only making him an object of evil. Thus, as we have seen clear examples of in sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2, Invisible Children is advocating us to take remedial responsible to end the suffering of northern Ugandans by framing them as victims, Kony as evil, and themselves as aiding heroes.

In Millers understanding of remedial responsibility we have an obligation to aid the northern Ugandans, even though we have not actively violated their rights, "Given that those who are suffering the effects of the regime are not themselves responsible for its existence, it seems that outsiders do have responsibilities in practice presents towards them" (Miller 2007:257). If we do not respond to this obligation, we are infringing on the rights of the northern Ugandans. Thus Invisible Children is right in assigning remedial responsibility to itself because it is our moral obligations to help does in need.

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<sup>64</sup> As seen in the introduction, we could also assign outcome responsibility to the Ugandan government and various other rebel groups, who therefore also would have a responsibility to remedy the situation for the northern Ugandans. But to not confuse the line of argument, and to keep Invisible Children's framing in focus, I will only refer to Kony in this discussion of assigning responsibility.

Invisible Children is working within a development sphere focussing on an unjust situation and advocating for justice to the northern Ugandans, as seen in section 4.5. According to Carens (2013) all organisation or movements working within development have these kind of ethical concerns as their primary goals, he states, "Whatever the specific formulation of their mission – social justice, human right, and so on – their *raison d'être* is the promotion of some moral good" (Carens 2013:257). The thesis' investigation of Invisible Children's advocacy has shown that Invisible Children holds the same kind of ethical goal; foster peace to the northern Ugandan by capturing Kony and bringing him to justice.

According to Thomas Pogge (2013) we, when giving contributions to development organisation or social movements such as Invisible Children, assign trust to them - we trust that Invisible Children has developed carefully formulated moral priorities governing how the collected fundraising is spent, we trust that Invisible Children has produced the information it needs to prioritise well in its work, and we trust Invisible Children do this efficiently (Pogge 2013:221). This trust can be understood as expecting the outcomes of Invisible Children's action discharge our remedial responsibilities. In this way, the contributors are letting Invisible Children handle their remedially responsibility to the northern Ugandans under the assumptions that Invisible Children is a morally good cosmopolitan actor, expecting its initiatives to promote more good and less harm for the northern Ugandans.

When Invisible Children take this remedial responsibility to the northern Ugandans upon itself, it also becomes outcome responsible for the consequences of its actions in trying to remedy the situation for the northern Ugandans through its framing of meaning for action. The thesis' investigation of Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action has raised important questions of Invisible Children's advocacy and which implications it brings. I can therefore question whether Invisible Children's advocacy for the northern Ugandans promotes more good and less harm.

In the following section I will further investigate these implications, while discussing how Invisible Children can be identified as outcome responsibility and to what extent Invisible Children can be assigned outcome responsibility for the consequences of its actions and beliefs.

### **6.3 Framing stereotypes and the responsibility that follows**

In this section I will discuss the implications of Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign found in Chapter 4 and 5 in relation to Miller and Code's concepts of responsibility. This is done to investigate whether Invisible Children is promoting more good than harm to the northern Ugandans in its framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign.

As we saw in Chapter 4, Invisible Children is framing the Kony2012 campaign through a simplistic storyline focusing on the unjust situation of the victims, the children of northern Uganda, and the responsible enemy, Kony. Invisible Children portrays the children's fear and suffering of the child-abduction by Joseph Kony, through Jacob testimony in section 4.3, framing them as the innocent victims that everyone watching should help save by engaging with Invisible Children. A member from Resolve, another organisation who focus on northern Uganda, comment on the Invisible Children's storyline, "they have played that up very effectively in creating a storyline that is purely humanitarian and using the most vulnerable possible characters in that storyline, you know they've mainly attracted kids, justifiably, I mean, you have to have an angle to tap people's attention initially but they have done it in a way that is completely apolitical" (Finnegan 2011:93).

In section 5.3, I have argued that this stereotypical framing of the northern Ugandans has some unfortunate fundamental epistemic implications. However, looking closer at development campaigns and the media surrounding it, it becomes evident that injustice framing is normal, and some will even argue, necessary to get the message out. According to Joseph Davis (2005) constructionist scholars of social problems argue that the construction of victim frame is shaped by public expectation and necessities. Davis states, "they maintain that gaining public recognition of a social problem requires claim-making to demonstrate harm. Gaining public sympathy and help for those putatively injured requires establishing their moral goodness, as a person innocent of any responsibilities or fault for the harm suffered" (Davis 2005:530). This is in line with Miller's understanding of remedial responsibility, as it is human beings who have no fault in the experienced harm to whom we have the strongest remedial obligation.

According to Simon Cottle and David Nolan (2007) the civil society platform is crowded with NGO's and social movements which inevitably produces a sense of competition and the need to raise the organizational profile in the media whenever possible, as the National Communications Manager of the Red Cross Australia states, "When it all boils down, we're basically all trying to do the same thing. But we are aware that we're all competing for the same dollar. Really, you can't do what we need to do without funding" (Cottle&Nolan 2007:865). Thus the conflict in simple terms can help raise awareness and media attention which Invisible Children may find necessary in the competitive field of international development campaigns. To this Brough adds that because of the high level of dependability on fundraising, those responsible for the visual representation in campaigning often find themselves in a double bind, juggling the fiscal pressure to frame beneficiaries as helpless victims in order to raise funds for programs that aim to empower these very same beneficiaries (Brough 2012:179), Keck and Sikkink underlined the same point in section 4.4.1, they argued that there was a conflict between dramatic pictures and credible information. Brough states, "Maintaining the dignity of beneficiaries while exploiting the representation of their

very disempowerment is one of the primary discursive struggles within the sector, waged largely through visual representation” (Brough 2012:179).

We can now understand why Invisible Children chose to simplistically frame the northern Ugandans as innocent victims, it is however, not clear whether this argumentation for Invisible Children’s framing of meaning for action can remove the moral blameworthy element in its epistemic irresponsible behaviour and whether it fulfil the moral duty of remedy it has taken upon itself. To discuss this we need to have a general understanding of the implication of such framings in relation to outcome and remedial responsibility.

### **6.3.1 Promoting more harm than good**

As shown above through Keck and Sikkink, and Brough, there is a conflict between exploiting the northern Ugandans representation through dramatic picturing while maintaining their dignity through credible information use. According to Miller, we need always to see human beings as both needy and vulnerable and as choosing agents. Miller states that, “human beings cannot live decent, let alone flourishing lives unless they are given at least a minimum bundle of freedoms, opportunities, and resources (...) Where people lack these conditions, it seems that those who are better endowed have obligations of justice to help provide them. On the other hand, human beings are choosing agents who must take responsibility for their own lives” (Miller 2007:5-6). According to Miller, and as discussed in section 6.2.4, we have a remedial responsibility to help those in need to some basic resource, however, we should still understand these people as having a possibility for altering their lives, thus having outcome responsibility for their actions.

Miller argues that in seeing human beings as victim, we understand them as people to whom things have happened that they are powerless to resist (Miller 2007:5), to this Miller adds, that if we do not understand victims both as needy and vulnerable human beings, and as responsible agents, then, we are denying them their agency to alter their lives (Miller 2007:6-7). Fricker agrees with this point, and argues that the epistemic injustice the northern Ugandans are experiencing due to Invisible Children’s framing is dehumanizing because being wrong in ones capacity as a knower is being wronged in an essential human value and essential to human wellbeing, seen in section 5.3.3. Likewise Moore adds to this point. He states that the missing dates in the footage of the Kony2012 are problematic. He understands this as important because “dateless footage of a sobbing African child reinforces media stereotypes about Africa as a place of unending violence, static and senseless” (Moore 2012:94). Moore adds that the testimony of Jacob is not a timeless symbol of a terrible warlord, the story of the LRA has changed over time, and offering the illusion that Jacob’s

story is present skews the facts about the war in Uganda (Moore 2012:94). The missing dating of the footage in the Kony2012 video underlines the Ugandan as a stereotypical poor victim.

As seen in section 6.2.2 Invisible Children is outcome responsible for the implication the framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign creates. As we saw in section 6.2.3 and in Chapter 5, Invisible Children should have behaved more epistemic responsible in its epistemic assessment in the Kony2012, and that it is this epistemically irresponsibility in its framing of meaning which lays the groundwork for its action. Thus Invisible Children is outcome responsible for the implications the Kony2012 campaign enhances. Additionally, Invisible Children does not meet the requirement of the remedial responsibility it assigns itself. This because, Invisible Children has an obligation not to inflict additional harm to the northern Ugandans through its advocacy, but as we can see Invisible Children does that through its framing of unreliable stereotypes.<sup>65</sup> As we have seen in section 4.6.1, Invisible Children's counter-argument is that nuances paralyze us, and that any action to remedy the northern Ugandans situation is better than no action. Thus letting the complications of the Ugandan history be integrated in their framing of information would paralyze the movement's act.

However, remembering the distinction between positive and negative duties in section 6.2, it was worse to directly inflict harm, than to fail to prevent it. This understanding entails that it is the same type of harm (which is not the case), or that Invisible Children is inflicting more harm than good. To this it is important to add two aspect: 1) Invisible Children cannot justify its argument, because it could or should have foreseen the consequences of its framings, as seen in section 6.2.2, and have tried to ameliorate this by making further epistemic inquiry and thereby built its framing on justified belief, and being epistemically responsible. Thus in this perspective it is better not to have inflicted harm, as the harm could have been foreseen. 2) Invisible Children could have justified inflicting harm on the northern Ugandans, if it promoted considerably more good than harm. Let's look at this second perspective.

The danger of Invisible Children's framing is, according to Finnegan, that mobilized Western activists may act on behalf of their African counterparts without the comprehensive understanding that is needed to address the problems, or to address what their African counterparts desire to be done, which is why such actions may displace the effort of African activists (Finnegan 2011:195). To this Pogge adds that it seem paternalistic to insist that our effort to protect people must be guided by our own personal notion of harm or justice rather than theirs (Pogge 2013:227).

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<sup>65</sup> Through the criticism in section 4.6 Invisible Children could properly be assigned additional outcome responsibility for the proposed solution of a military intervention, and irresponsible use of economic resources, however, as I have not discussed this thoroughly I will not conclude on this.

As we have seen in section 4.4.2 Invisible Children's and the Ugandan activists' proposed solutions and desired next steps stands as complete opposites. Additionally we can understand the Ugandan bloggers and activist statements as asking Invisible Children to respect their agency. When Invisible Children is only focussing on its personal understanding of how to remedy the Ugandan suffering, it act paternalistically and displace the local efforts which again is denying the Ugandans their agency. Thus the stereotypical framing of victims additionally has the implications that it displaces the Ugandans own effort. Taking Pogge's argument into account Invisible Children needed to take the northern Ugandans understanding of harm and injustice into account in its prognostic framings proposed solutions to the conflict.

If Invisible Children had done this, it would have respected the Ugandans agency and been epistemic responsible in its framing as it would have integrated the northern Ugandans understanding of the conflict and proposed solutions to ending the suffering in its advocacy. Likewise it would also have made the northern Ugandans epistemically responsible for the framing of information and outcome responsible for the actions such framing would have resulted in.

### **6.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed whether and how Invisible Children is responsible to its framing of meaning for action through the components: outcome, epistemic, and remedial responsibility.

Through outcome responsibility we saw that Invisible Children is outcome responsible for its framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign, as it could or should have foreseen the implications of its framing, and if Invisible Children could not have foreseen these consequences on account of its unreliable stereotypical understandings of the northern Ugandans, it should have been aware of these shortcomings by taking the criticism towards the campaign seriously.

Additionally we saw the members also are responsible, even though the framing of information was somewhat manipulative. However, because the members voluntarily chose to engage with Invisible Children, they are also outcome responsible for the implications of framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign.

Through epistemic responsibility I argued, that we are epistemically responsible in activities such as information gathering, paying attention, making judgements etc. Thus Invisible Children has an epistemic responsibility in its framing of meaning for action because such framing is related to this kind of epistemic inquiry, and as seen in Chapter 5, it was not trustworthy in these assessment. I therefore conclude that Invisible Children is epistemic irresponsible in its framing of information. However, moral concerns can override the epistemic owns, if these were judged more pressing.

Thus I needed to investigate whether Invisible Children could be excused its epistemic irresponsible behaviour by preventing harm and promoting good to the northern Ugandans.

This turned us to remedial responsibility. Through Miller, I argued that Invisible Children was right in taking the responsibility to remedy the situation for the northern Ugandan, because not responding to those in need and suffering would be a moral failure of respect. However, Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action was not promoting more good than harm, as Invisible Children weakened the northern Ugandans agency framing them only as victims; therefore Invisible Children did not fulfil its remedial responsibility. According to Miller it is a failure of respect to ignore this agency, and in chapter 4 and 5 we saw that this failure of respect had some serious consequences for the northern Ugandans. I can therefore conclude that Invisible Children is morally culpable in the Kony2012 campaign, as its framing of meaning for action creates more harm than good for the northern Ugandans.

## 7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I will conclude on the main research question: *How can Invisible Children's success in motivating young people, and in framing meaning for action be explained? How can this framing of meaning for action be understood as knowledge? And in which way can Invisible Children be held responsible for the implications of such framing?*

The conclusion is based on the analyses and discussions made in this thesis. I will answer the main research question's questions separately. Lastly, I will discuss which aspects of the thesis' conclusions that can be generalised to including development campaigns in general.

*How can Invisible Children's success in motivating young people, and in framing meaning for action be explained?*

Invisible Children's media is naturally the most important aspect in motivating young people to get involved in the movement, as the media is often the members' first encounter with Invisible Children. Invisible Children uses its media to create collective identities, shared emotions, and frame meaning for action through its collective action frame.

Invisible Children has been very successful in creating collective identity and shared emotions among its members which is crucial for its success, as the collective identity and shared emotions function as a motivational factor for Invisible Children's 'call to arms'. Invisible Children's easy, unchallenging recipes for action motivate the members to get involved and make them feel they have a responsibility to 'make a difference'. Invisible Children does an excellent job of showing each member that they are not just a number in the masses by ensuring them that they are part of something important, something that can make history.

Invisible Children frames meaning for action through its collective action analysed through three components: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing. Invisible Children is assigning blame and outcome responsibility for the war in Uganda to Joseph Kony through its injustice diagnostic frame. It frames Kony as an object of pure evil who is outcome responsible for the Ugandans' suffering, the northern Ugandans as innocent victims to whom Invisible Children and everyone who encounter its media have a remedial responsibility to help out of their suffering, and itself as American heroes that have both an obligation and the abilities to remedy the situation for the northern Ugandans by capturing Kony and bring him to justice.

Invisible Children advocates for a simplistic line of action to reach justice for the northern Ugandans through a military intervention. In this prognostic frame, the advocacy role of Invisible

Children's members is primarily to leverage preselected celebrities and policymakers through social media platforms and collect funds through fundraising events. The prognostic framing underlines the no wave-making activism that synergise well with the members' cultural understanding of the world as a good place. In this understanding of no-wave making activism, it becomes more important to do something than not to do anything in the face of the Ugandans' suffering.

Invisible Children uses its motivational frame to call its members to arms through two central values, universalism and benevolence which are an expression of moral cosmopolitanism. These values create a motivational feeling for action which I have analysed through four categories: making a difference, guilt, feeling special, and belonging. Invisible Children makes the members feel that they have an opportunity and a remedial responsibility to make a difference through creative fundraising events. Additionally, the members feel guilt because they have so much compared to the northern Ugandans. They also feel they belong to the Invisible Children community which sustains their commitment. Thus Invisible Children functions as a social outlet and a hip, young environment where the members feel they belong.

*How can this framing of meaning for action be understood as knowledge?*

The information in the Kony2012 campaign is built upon testimonial utterances from experts and upon personal stories. In our everyday practice as epistemic agents, it is natural for us to understand other's testimonies as knowledge to which we assign different amounts of credibility and trust. When we assign trust and credibility, we engage in a stereotypical social categorisation where we normally understand testimonies from experts such as Ocampo to be trustworthy. Thus to analyse whether Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign is knowledge or justified belief, I analysed whether we could assign trust to Invisible Children's assessment in the Kony2012 campaign and thereby whether we could understand the framing of information in the Kony2012 campaign as knowledge.

Because of the heavy criticism of Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action in Kony2012, there is a lot at stake in Invisible Children's epistemic assessments and thus a high degree of trustworthiness is required. This entails that Invisible Children has a well-founded epistemic character. Looking at the founders, it became clear that they had too high a degree of self-confidence in their epistemic character which is keeping them from making the further, necessary epistemic investigation to get a justified understanding of the war in Uganda. When the members and the roadies extended the epistemic principle of charity to the founders' assessment in the Kony2012 campaign, they equally assigned confidence to its epistemic trustworthiness. Because the founders' assessment in the Kony2012 campaign was not trustworthy and because the

members and roadies easily, on account of the heavy criticism, could have sought additional information, they also become epistemically untrustworthy by assigning of trust to the founders.

*In which way can Invisible Children be held responsible for the implications of such framing?*

The two main criticisms of Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign was an oversimplification of the conflict, and that the campaign gives no agency to the northern Ugandans. In analysing these critiques in relation to Invisible Children's framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign, it became clear that the framing had some unfortunate implications to which we can hold Invisible Children epistemically, outcome and remedially responsible.

Invisible Children behaves epistemically irresponsibly in its epistemic assessment in the Kony2012 campaign as it is not trustworthy in its epistemic assessments. Invisible Children's epistemic behaviour is based upon unreliable, stereotypical prejudice towards the northern Ugandans. Such prejudices wrong the northern Ugandans in their capacity as knowers which is equivalent to being wronged in an essential human value and human wellbeing.

Invisible Children is *outcome responsible* for its framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign because it should or could have foreseen the problematic outcomes of its framing by taken the criticism towards it seriously, and by being aware of the shortcomings in its unreliable, stereotypical understanding of the northern Ugandans. The members cannot be excused their outcome responsibility even though the framing of information is somewhat manipulative, as the members themselves chose to engage in Invisible Children.

Invisible Children is right in taking the responsibility to remedy the situation of the northern Ugandans, as we have a moral obligation to help those in need of our aid. However, Invisible Children is not behaving responsibly in its effort to remedy the situation for the northern Ugandans because it does not give any agency to the Ugandans in its campaigning and thereby disrespecting them as epistemic agents who have the potential to alter their own lives. Since Invisible Children is outcome responsible in the remedial responsibility it chose to take, it is therefore morally culpable in its framing of meaning for action in the Kony2012 campaign as its framing of meaning for action produced more harm than good for the northern Ugandans.

### 7.1 Generalising the conclusion

In this section, I will discuss which aspects of the conclusion that can be generalised to include development campaigns in general, mainly with focus on the responsibility that development campaigns have.

In Chapter 6.3, I argued that it was not only Invisible Children who used the injustice framing in its campaign and that there is a general conflict between exploiting the beneficiaries' suffering to create dramatic pictures while maintaining their dignity through credible use of information. As the competition for funds increases, development campaigns become more prone to use victimising injustice framing to punctuate a moral cosmopolitanism understanding of universal and benevolent values because such framing has a tendency to attract more funds.

When development actors take the responsibility to remedying the suffering or unjust situation for a population in need, such actors have a responsibility to reflect on which outcomes can be foreseen from a given campaign. This would require them to reflect on their shortcomings in general and on their epistemic character and stereotypical prejudice.

If we make such investigations thoroughly, we can avoid some of the implications Invisible Children has in its campaigning, as this would require us to make a thorough epistemic investigation of the given situation thus to be epistemically trustworthy and respect the agency of the population whom we have remedial responsibility to help. If we, in spite of our best efforts, still detect that our actions in a given development campaign inflict more harm than good to the beneficiaries, then, we it would be our remedial responsibility to stop the actions and redirect them because is it worse to directly inflict harm than to fail to prevent it.

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