How Social Campaigns Fail to Change the World: A review of the key themes in the literature

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Abstract

This paper examines the barriers to developing the engagement around specific social problems and campaigns and, if particular barriers in creating effective social movements around them to mobilise researches, awareness and people in order to address these problem. This review will present a series of concepts categorised around a small number of relevant themes, concluding with a reflection on the nature of success.

Introduction

The world population is expanding, the level of economic production is rising, while at the same time levels of mobility, interactivity and information sharing between different social groups, organisations, nations and transnational bodies is also increasing, and at a seemingly ever accelerating pace. The rate and type of change that such absolute growth generates when coupled with the intensification of the global flows of such resources, is transformative. Indeed it has become commonplace to the point of banality to describe the world as globalised, connected, complex, reflexive, networked, dynamic, synergistic, informational, or using a range of other related concepts to explain the unprecedented interdependency of each portion of the globe.

Terms such as "globalisation," "global networks" and "glocalisation" used to describe the increasing level of interdependency are contested terms:

> Globalization is on everybody's lips; a fad word fast turning into a shibboleth, a magic incantation, a pass-key meant to unlock the gates to all present and future mysteries' (Bauman 1998: 1)

Yet despite Bauman's caution in the use of the term, the concept of globalisation has a great deal of substance and this global proximity in a shrinking world is creating new conditions and opportunities but also producing social and ecological problems on a new-to-the-world scale (Haynes et al. 2006).

While this is not meant to imply that individuals are suffering more than ever before, it means, rather that there is the perception that the amount of preventable suffering is greater than ever before. Indeed many of these preventable problems have been on the political agenda for decades:

> so far there's been a lack of appropriate effort, which includes many things. For development to work, rich countries need to help poor countries make certain practical investments that are often really very basic. Once you get your head around development issues and realize how solvable many of them are, there are tremendous things that can be done. But for decades we just haven't tried to do many of these basic things. For instance, one issue that has been tragically neglected for decades now is malaria. That's a disease that kills up to 3 million people every year. It's a disease that could be controlled quite dramatically and easily if we just put in the effort. It's truly hard for me to understand why we aren't (Sachs 2005: 2)

To understand why theses and similar problems are not being tackled effectively is the basis of this paper. It is becoming clearer that such complex problems can only be tackled through substantial and sustained global social movements (linking NGOs, governments, foundations, citizens etc). Yet these problems share distinctive characteristics which conventional public policy initiatives and social movements have not been able to engage the collective enthusiasm to adequately resolve them. These problems tend to be far removed from centres of power and money, they tend to be extremely complicated, there are lots of them, and they are woven into social and political struggles that complicate the humanitarian agenda (see Haynes 2002).

Competition

The complexity and multiplicity of events, opportunities, identities, technology and interaction have produced a vast range of social, political and charitable causes[1] both locally and globally. Some of these causes attract vast amounts of attention, publicity, money and political will, other causes, though similar in almost every way, attract little attention and fewer resources, indeed the vast majority of causes are unable to capture the attention of more than a tiny group of supporters. With some causes, the interest is likely to appeal only to those within a specific catchment area and remain a local issue, with others the cause is minor or idiosyncratic and there is not the expectation of attracting more than a few people. However, for other campaigns, with the need to harness more support, resources and alliances, the situation is very different. Their ability to obtain influence or to generate change begins with the process of raising their own profile, raising awareness of their cause, enrolling people in either large quantities, of high dedication, or of the "right type" to inspire others (celebrities, experts, opinion leaders, decision makers, networkers etc).

Representative organisations of substantial causes need to tap the sympathy, attention, support and money of influential people, either directly or indirectly through the support of large numbers of individuals. More likely, they need to draw on both.

Which strategies to use to maximise this support and to develop it into an effective and sustained campaign, and which strategies to use to turn this support into effective solutions are the core issues that need to be resolved if such causes are to be as

[1] In June 2005 there were 167 022 registered charities in England and Wales alone. The top 500 charities (0.3%) receive more than 46% of the entire charity contribution.

effective as possible. Identifying these strategies and the barriers to implementing these strategies effectively is the basis of this paper.

The assumption that public attention is likely to be limited, illustrates the interconnectivity between various causes because of the need to compete for publicity, though organisations might not consider that they are in fact involved in a zero sum competition, but think of themselves as explaining a problem, describing an injustice or banding together to try to do something about a certain issue. As Clifford Bob succinctly states:

> How and why do a handful of local challengers become global causes célèbres while scores of others remain isolated and obscure? What inspires powerful transnational networks to spring p around particular movements? Most basically, which of the world's myriad oppressed groups benefit from contemporary globalization? (Bob 2005: 2)

The consequences of this popularity contest are not therefore trivial, but a crucial part of the process of ending the suffering and oppression for one group or another.

How such organisations compete with each other for this attention and the reasons why some are successful and others much less successful are, though, complex issues. Stephen Hilgartner and Charles Bosk, in their work on public arenas models suggest a model for explaining how causes compete to engage public attention.

Hilgartner and Bosk use the notion of feedback to explain the process in which a social problem emerges and then dematerialises, developing a public arenas model structured within an ecological framework. They attempt to address the following question:

> Given the vast universe of possibilities, how do social forces select particular problem definitions? (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988: 53)

They do so by attempting to explain the process of social problem development through public attention competition and selection in the media and other arenas of public discourse. This is a particularly important issue for the success of campaigns as the assumption might otherwise be that the more worthy the claim, the more likely that issue would receive publicity and attention. Even with an extensive media, the internet, improved evidence gathering technology, growing numbers of NGOs, greater awareness in global interdependencies, some causes get a great deal of attention, while other that involve greater suffering receive virtually none:

> Whole categories of conflict, such as landlessness in Latin America and caste discrimination in South Asia, likewise go little noticed (see Bob 2005

The issue often involves giving to those that have, a type of awareness "lock-in" or increasing returns. When the type of arenas that Hilgartner and Bosk describe, achieve greater degrees of interconnectivity this creates a series of feedback mechanisms, which in turn augment the perception and visibility of specific social problems. This augmentation process, though, is constrained by the finite "carrying capacity" (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988: 53) of public arenas, and both by the

competition for public attention and also by the need to sustain drama. These drives and limitations create successive waves of problem definitions, Hilgartner and Bosk argue, as social problems and those attempting to bring them to public attention compete for their own space on the public agenda.

The model they develop to explain the processes at work within these public arenas can be outlined, then, according to its six key elements:

- A dynamic process of competition among the members of a very large "population" of social science claims
- The institutional arenas that serve as "environments" where social problems compete for attention and grow
- The "carrying capacities" of these arenas, which limit the number of problems that can gain widespread attention at one time
- The "principals of selection," or institutional, political, and cultural factors that influence the probability of survival of competing problem formations
- Patterns of interaction among the different arenas, such as feedback and synergy, through which activities in each arena spread throughout others
- The network of operatives who promote and attempt to control particular problems and whose channels of communication crisscross the different arenas (see Hilgartner and Bosk 1988: 56)

Such a model is not, however, meant to be a definitive model and the authors conclude that "much remains to be done to complete our understanding of the social problems process" (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988: 75) though it is a useful heuristic, which brings the complex and changing environment within which collective action, social movements, social trends and competing claims for political action and policy making, emerge and vie for the "resources" available.

To understand this competition for attention, this paper will briefly turn to the issues of framing, agenda-setting and priming, ideas that gained popularity with Walter Lippmann's Public Opinion (Lippmann 1922), before considering how such concepts are used by campaigns to enrol support for their cause.

Framing

The notion of framing used to indicate the schemata of interpretation to perceive and identify different types of events with which to organise life experience and guide individual and collective behaviour (Goffman 1974: 21) but a collective action frame process abstracts material not in a neutral way but in such a way as to mobilise support and disarm opponents. Dietram Scheufele provides a useful typology of media framing issues, which exemplifies some of the key questions associated with the way issues are framed:

- Media frames as dependent variables

Which factors influence journalists or other groups present an issue?
Which factors are used and how do theses processes work?

- Media frames as independent variables

Which types of approaches influence the audiences perception of specific issues, and how does this process function?

- Individual frames as dependent variables

Which factors influence of individual frames of reference and their relation to media frames?
How do audience members actively construct or resist interpretations?

- Individual frames as independent variable

How do these factors influence individual perceptions of issues?
(Scheufele 1999: 108-109)

Framing theory in a general sense can therefore be thought of as the area concerned with how organisations and the presentation of information impact on people's perceptions of that information, for example framing refers to the construct of specific communication and the way it signals how to interpret and classify new information, and as such, frames trigger meaning. In a very general sense, then, framing refers to the way in which the aims and objectives or an organisation are presented to resonate with the interests and aspirations of target groups. Campaigns and social movements in particular rely on this approach and therefore attempt to affect how the public and key targets perceive an issue by changing the way it is framed by the media.

Kirk Hallahan identifies seven major types of framing process, and while he directs his analysis towards public relations perspectives the themes are often derived from, and useful to, other areas of marketing, policy studies, media studies and social movements theory. While the categories outlined by Hallahan are not mutually exclusive, and different framing strategies outlined often function in coordination with others at different operational levels, the typology is useful in contextualising framing processes in a wide range of circumstances. The seven categories can be outlined as follows:

- Situations (Goffman 1974)

Emphasise relationships between individuals in situations found in everyday living. Framing of situations provides structures for examining communication. Applies to discourse analysis, negotiation and other similar types of interactions.

- Attribute (Ghanem 1997)

Characteristics of objectives and people are accentuated, whereas others are ignored, thus biasing processing of information in terms of focal attributes.

- Choices (Kahneman and Tverksy 1979)

Positive alternative decisions in either loss or gain terms can bias choices in situations involving uncertainty. Prospect theory suggests people will take greater risks to avoid losses than to obtain gains

- Actions (Smith and Petty 1996)

In persuasive contexts, the probability that a person will act to attain a desired goal is influenced by whether alternatives are stated in positive or negative terms.

- Issues (Snow and Benford 1988)

Social problems are disputes can be explained in alternative terms by different parties who vie for their preferred definition a problem or situation to prevail.

- Responsibility (Iyengar and Kinder 1987)

Individuals tend to attribute cause of events to either internal or external factors, based on levels of stability and control. People portray their role in events consistent with their self-image in ways that maximize benefits and minimise culpability. People attribute causes to personal actions rather than systemic problems in society.

- News (Gamson 1984)

Media reports use familiar, culturally resonating themes to relay information about events. Sources vie for their preferred framing to be featured through frame enterprise and frame sponsorship.

(see Hallahan 1999: 210)

There are also ways in which collective action frames vary in addition to their characteristic features outlined above. These include:

- problem identification and direction or locus of attribution, eg. the degree to which an issue can be plausibly connected with other issues
- flexibility and rigidity – inclusivity and exclusivity, eg. the nature of the network that hold the conceptual basis together
- interpretive scope and influence, eg. the strategic emphasis on specific issues, from a wider package of potential issues covered
- degree of resonance, eg. the credibility or salience of an issue in being persuasive in mobilisation of interest

(see Benford and Snow 2000 618-622)

Agenda Setting

This theory emphasises that the media does not necessarily instruct the way thinking takes place, but its content. The media acts as a "gatekeeper" of information and determines which issues are important, and perhaps, who has standing in presenting these issues. The theory holds that information or issues that appear more often in the media become more salient for the public and determine political and social priorities. As Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw said:

> Broadcasters play in important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position (McCombs and Shaw 1972)

Or, as Bernard Cohen famously argued:

> The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*. (Cohen 1963: 13)

Agenda setting theory explains the process of competition to gain attention for one set of issues rather than another. This can involve a range of communication channels through which competing interests seek to influence perceptions about key issues, and is not limited to the impact the media influence on developing public interest and opinion. For example, the way in which people seek orientation to information alters from individual to individual and indeed, it is more likely that there is individuated co-dependency between the media, key individuals, groups and organisations. Even extensive research in the 1970s and 1980s (McCombs and Shaw 1972; Funkhouser 1973; Iyengar and Kinder 1987) revealed that there were no simple cause-effect relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda, but instead illustrates the fact that information and narratives require interpretation, which cannot be neutral. The findings of McCombs and Shaw, for example, showed that the agenda setting influence of the media was limited where the salience of an issue was deemed by subjects to be high and where in particular amongst subjects categorised as of high interest in political issues. Iyengar and Kinder, on the other hand show that certain political issues become priority issues to the general public only if they become high priority news issues for the networks. More recent research (Gamson et al 1992; Graber 1993; Smith et al 2001; Haynes 2011) suggests that agenda setting is a process that those contributing to the media (editors, journalists, lobby groups, advertisers, spin doctors etc) and recipients of the media (viewers, readers) are locked into a complex and dynamic relationship that is fundamentally adaptive, reflecting:

> new dynamics of agenda setting and agenda building, as movements and authorities learn from past interactions and adapt their efforts to new opportunities and technologies. (Smith et al 2001)

Or, as Gamson et al. conclude in an interpretation which emphasises the more subversive nature of receiving media messages:

> The messages provide a many-voiced, open text that can and often is read oppositionally, at least in part. Television imagery is a site of struggle where the powers that be are often forced to compete and defend what they would prefer to be taken for granted. The underdetermined nature of media discourse allows plenty of room for challengers such as social movements to offer competing constructions of reality and to find support for them from readers whose daily lives may lead them to construct meanings in ways that go beyond media imagery. (Gamson et al. 1992: 391)

In addition to the limitations to controlling discourse through agenda setting, recently, the reaction of political parties to the recognition of public opinion hostility towards spin doctors, PR consultants and interest aggregators further limits the options and strategies of parties, groups, media editors to impose their picture of events on public opinion.

Priming

Related to agenda-setting is the concept of priming, the process in which the media attend to some issues and not others and thereby alter the standards by which people evaluate issues, people, or objects. For example, the more the media pays attention to

the issue of campaign finance reform in an election, the more the public will use that issue to evaluate the candidates. This theory is based on the assumption that people do not have elaborate knowledge and are selective, and often directed, in using the information they have in making decisions (see Alger 1989).

According to Pan and Kosicki (1997) the theory of media priming is derived from the associative network model of human memory, in which an idea or concept is stored as a node in the network and is related to other concepts by semantic paths. Priming, then, refers in this case to the activation of a specific node in this network, which then functions to contextualise information content for further processing, including judgement. Domke, Shah, and Wackman (1998) further develop this notion by developing the model to include both short-term and long-term memory evaluations as related to the agenda-setting and framing processes undertaken in the media, which they argue can activate particular cognitions. These cognitions might then, in turn be used in evaluating other elements of the political environment, they argue (see Domke, Shah, and Wackman 1998: 68-69). Their research found support for the following three hypotheses, though the research is too limited to make strong claims:
:

- Individuals evaluating a political environment which includes a social- moral issue, in this case abortion or euthanasia, will be more likely to make attributions about candidate integrity
- Individuals evaluating an ambiguous issue framed in ethical terms, in this case health care, will be more likely to form ethical interpretations of material issues
- Individuals with highly integrated mental frameworks about the objects under consideration will be more likely to exhibit spreading activation priming about the objects under consideration

Jacobs and Shapiro, however, demonstrate that priming can also be an unintended consequence of other strategies, as in their example of the 1960 presidential election campaign. They argue that Kennedy's campaign used the findings from opinion polls to direct his position on specific issues in order to shape his image with voters. The intension was to demonstrate that that Kennedy was in touch with the concerns of voters, resonating their priorities, but another effect was to make these issues more central to the campaign, focussing on these as differences between the candidates.

Despite the view that priming is likely to be an important aspect of agenda setting theory, the process of is difficult to fully exemplify with any certainty:

> The further one moves from the general notion that media direct attention and shape cognitions and towards examining actual cases, the more uncertain it becomes whether such an effect actually occurs (McQuail 1994: 356)

While causal connections between framing, agenda setting and priming to public opinion and how this is turned into political action and policy change are not shown in any of the research evaluated in this paper, understanding the connections between such factors in an indirect series of interdependencies is crucial in determining how narratives and discourses are developed between large groups of individuals.

Finally building on the work on framing, agenda setting and priming Weiss and Tschirhart (1994) identify four tasks that they consider make campaigns more likely to produce their intended policy results:

- To capture the attention of the right audience
- To deliver an understandable and credible message
- To deliver a message that influences the beliefs or understanding of the audience
- To create social contexts that lead toward desired outcomes

This wish-list is a useful reminder that the needs for the content of a campaign and its marketing can be explained in very relatively simple terms, while the compromises required to seem more credible might also lead to internal conflict in a campaign, which is likely to cause other problems for the campaign. Additionally, the expectations of the intended audiences (NGOs, policy makers, public opinion, activists) combined with the competition between campaigns means that the way to capture the audience, deliver a credible and influential message and alter the social context of a debate (all of which requires effective agenda setting, framing and priming) is always in the process of change. To illustrate the way such dynamics and compromises have been dealt with effectively (and not so effectively) by real campaigns, the paper will now return to the work of Clifford Bob mentioned earlier.

Becoming Global Causes Célèbres

In addressing the issue of why some campaigns and social movements become popular and well known throughout the world, while other movements, similar in "worthiness" by any measure, have very little impact, the issue of competition, framing, agenda setting and priming are useful concepts. They are useful in explaining in hindsight some of the potential reasons for success and failure in generating interest and support for a cause. In addition to these concepts, there are many related factors that help to explain how these features interconnect and are supported in order to generate awareness and support for a campaign.

The various reasons for a campaign being successful in generating international awareness is discussed at length by Clifford Bob in his assessment the strategies of four movements divided into two case studies: the Movement for the survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) contrasted with the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) in Nigeria, and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) contrasted with the Army of Popular Revolution (EPR) in Mexico (seeBob 2005). By examining these case studies and assessing a wide range of popular campaigns since the 1980s, Bob considers successful (transnational) strategies for attracting the support of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) to causes and campaigns:

Raising NGO awareness

- Targeted Lobbying

International awareness is important but often requires using existing contacts in the target country, or using less powerful NGOs to gain access to larger "gatekeeper" NGOs with more power, finance, network resources and standing. Direct personal contact with NGOs can act as market research and network building and it often helps

the campaign to have representatives based in London, New York, Brussels etc. for this purpose or to take part in events in the target country (international conferences, lobbying trips, solidarity tours etc) with the intention of bringing the campaign to the attention of NGOs.

- Conscious- raising

This process is much broader that lobbying and involve a range of strategies (web dissemination of selective information; press releases; journalistic reporting; political spectacles) which to be effective often involve careful timing, aligning with pre-existing news values, trained spokes persons or PR firms). There is, though, no guarantee of capturing the attention of NGOs or public attention, especially when there are vast numbers of organisations that compete for the limited attention.

Re-framing to cohere/resonate with NGOs

- Goals

NGOs generally limit their purpose to a small array of criteria that fit their mission, and support causes and campaigns that reflect this purpose. Groups and movements need therefore to direct themselves to potential supporters that reflect their goals, or else simplify and universalise their cause (eg. demonise opponents, alter their discourse, appeal to self interest in addition to sympathy; emphasise their coherence and courage) to appeal for an ally to support them rather than charity.

- Culture

A local cause reflects local cultural factors, some of which might be inappropriate in developing countries where target NGOs are based, such as gender inequality, Islamist groups or undemocratic decision making. Organisations that reflect the progressive values of an NGO, or its organisational culture and structure or those that are represented by staff of the same type as NGO staff (university educated, professional, cosmopolitan) are taken more seriously by NGOs, and those that modify their message to fit the NGO's client profile increase their chance of support.

- Tactics

Campaigns need to contact the NGO that match their needs most effectively, either broad or more specialist approaches, but one that provides the type of assistance that the campaign requires. Foundations providing grant money or training and other support that is less monitored enables a campaign to have a higher degree of flexibility with the partner organisation.

- Ethics

NGOs generally support groups that follow methods that fit their own ethical framework, including in particular commitment to non-violent action. Many campaigns in the developing world take place in a more dangerous environment, where repression and violence is often used against the group, and non-violence is a matter of degree. Strategically, a violent spectacle, or selective violence by supporters met with an exaggerated violent response by opponents, can raise awareness of a campaign more effectively than years of peaceful protests. Raising awareness through unethical means which alienates potentially powerful supporters can be a calculated risk for a campaign.

- Organisational Factors

NGOs are more likely to support campaigns that help them to fulfil their goals or mission. NGOs need to maintain their own organisational ends, which will affect which client groups and campaigns they approve. Association with campaigns that are unlikely to succeed or are unable to leverage social change can harm an NGO's reputation. Campaigns that show that victories are possible, those that involve a unified movement, and from which the credit can be traced back to the NGO, enhancing the reputation and prestige of NGO and campaign, are given higher funding priority. Once key "gatekeeper" NGOs back a campaign, other, secondary NGOs can be enrolled to the cause through the rise in status and legitimacy of the cause, and the costs (evidence gathering, campaign capacity building, etc) have been borne by the first NGOs in the field. Succeeding in test cases and having well known clients benefits each NGO associated with a cause.

(see Bob 2005: 20-41)

In addition to these strategies for gaining NGO support, Bob also identifies a wide range of structural factors affecting the success of these strategies in attracting both NGO support and generating awareness on a global scale to become a global cause célèbre, though his particular emphasis is on individual causes based in one region of a developing country. The structural factors that Bob identifies as important for attracting support, are categorised into six characteristics of the campaign organisation and two further characteristics of the principal opponents to the campaign.

Movement Characteristics:

- Standing

The degree to which an issue is known internationally for pre-existing non political reasons (eg. myths, awards, celebrity supporters) can confer greater legitimacy on the cause. This enables an organisation to develop a cause and attract support through some prior recognition to an international audience.

- Contracts

The type of network that an organisation can develop is crucial in presenting a case to a wider, international audience. Contact with people in developed countries (eg. through activists' previous experience in other countries, the diaspora abroad, personal networks) can give a cause more access to the media and NGOs by alerting them to the existence of an issue.

- Knowledge

A wide range of knowledge is important in improving the effectiveness of a campaign. Expertise in presenting the campaign (fluency in English, understanding the documentation/bureaucracy to write a proposal, knowledge of NGOs and their expectations) is crucial if the campaign needs to attract the support of NGOs or frame their campaign to capture the international zeitgeist.

- Material Resources

While money can't buy popularity, spending is often necessary to organise effectively and disseminate information abroad (foreign lobbying trips, hiring professional public

relations firms, full time local staff, evidence gathering, research) without which the cause

- Organisational Resources

These factors (eg. a group's unity, coherence, integrity, teamwork drive) can enable an organisation to direct the cause towards external mobilisation through planning, organising and coordinating events, and to guide the activism in a way that reaches larger numbers of people and can be presented in the most effective way locally and to NGOs and the international media.

- Leadership

While change is achieved through collective action and multiple organisations, charismatic leadership can contribute to the promotion of a cause as the representative or face of the campaign, often embodying the suffering or injustice that the campaign seeks to address. People such as Chico Mendes, Nelson Mandela, Yessir Arafat, Aung San Suu Kyi, Martin Luther King and the Dalai Lama were each able to attract support to their cause through their perceived integrity and sacrifice.

Opponent Characteristics:

- Identity

Organisations and campaigns face opponents of different types, but some opponents (eg. dictatorship or powerful multinational companies) give a campaign more weight, particularly in building alliances with NGOs or other activists who recognise the worth of a cause by the negative reputation of the opponent. A campaign can strategically emphasise one opponent that might have a more negative image or might be more known on the international scene in order to make the campaign seem more worthy or less parochial.

- Reactions

The way in which an opponent reacts to a campaign or cause can impact on the support given to that campaign and the degree of international concern and attention that NGOs and the media exhibit. A non-violent protest met with a violent reaction from the opponent often brings more urgency and a sense of moral superiority that attracts additional allies at an international level.

(Bob 2005: 43-51)

These strategies and characteristics raise some important questions about the potential for branding strategies to improve a campaign's chance of forming a more successful relationship with NGOs and to be able to frame the cause more effectively to public opinion. The value of NGOs to campaigns and the value of campaigns to NGOs also illustrates that the collective value to, and needs from, policy makers and political parties might also be a productive for a campaign to consider when developing an alliance. The paper will turn to this issue when considering the potential barriers to a successful campaign.

There are, though, considerable differences between local causes that seek international awareness and a global, multiple challenge campaigns that seeks not

merely greater awareness, but to turn this awareness into socio-economic change. Obtaining support from powerful gatekeepers and decision makers

The Influence of Non Governmental Organisations

The profile of NGO activity seems to be gaining in importance, with the literature arguing for some time that they are moving to a global civil society (see Lipschutz 1992). Two strategies identified that support this claim is that NGOs act to improve political responsiveness by represent public opinion more effectively because of their structure, which also enables them to speak on behalf of excluded interests, and being able to act collectively, and expertly, as an alternative power source in order to limit government authority.

Such global social interaction networks must, though be dense enough and powerful enough to have a significant impact on policy making, through lobbying, influencing government and trans-national governance bodies (UN, WTO, IMF, G7/8) through other direct contact, mobilising public opinion and networking activity, or a combination of these approaches.

Empirical findings suggest that while there were an increased number of NGOs, the geographical representation is centred in the developed world. In addition NGO repertoires are typically met by state-imposed, sometimes arbitrary limits, and while there is more interdependency amongst NGOs, the amount of NGO-state interaction is often constrained by government (in)activity. Finally, empirical findings suggest that there is continued development of mutual understandings among NGOs but a lack of shared NGO-state frames and, in particular, sovereignty claims, create barrier to developing key NGO-state relationships (see Clark, Friedman and Hochstler 1998: 34)

> In the final analysis, even new kinds of global conferences on new global issues with new global participants remain partially imprisoned by traditional roles and priorities of international politics. State sovereignty sets the limits of global civil society (Clark, Friedman and Hochstler 1998: 35)

The issue can be addressed in the opposite direction, i.e. to explaining the type of interaction between key players, or the mechanisms involved, that can effectively turn an interest group agenda into a successful campaign. There are a number of models that explain how this occurs, but Marco Giugni and Florence Passy offer a thorough overview of four of the principal models.

According to Giugni and Passy, social movements, in their interactions with power holders, need additional "third party" support to bring about political change by forcing the political authorities to take into account their claims and alter their policies as appropriate (see also Lipsky 1970). This third party support is, according to some researcher for example Paul Burstein (1985; 1998; 1999) the need to mobilise public opinion while for others, for example Sydney Tarrow (1989; 1993; 1994) the need to mobilise powerful allies inside the institutional arenas.

Giugni and Passy further argue that a number of broad models have emerged to explain the role of public opinion and political/policy making alliances in enabling social movements to leverage policy change. These models are the direct-effect model, two versions of the mediated-effect model, and the joint effect model. Following Giugni and Passy's identification of competing models, these models can be outlined very clearly, explaining the role of public opinion and social movement activity in leveraging such policy change:

- The direct model (for example Andrews 1997; 2001)

These theories differ in their sophistication, optimism and analysis, and perhaps include much of the early writing on social movements, arguing that social movements have a substantial impact on public policy, with political change following as a direct and linear outcome of social movement activity.

- The public opinion mediated effect (Costain and Majstorovic 1994; Burstein 1985; Burstein and Linton 2002)

These theories argue that social movements alter public opinion about a specific issue, through public awareness or making it a more salient issue. Changes in public opinion influence policy makers (and policy implementers) to modify policies accordingly, either out of their own political interest or the desire to align policy with public opinion.

- The politically mediated effect (Kriesi et al. 1995; Tarrow 1994)

These theories argue that while mediation is important, it is most effective by established political allies within the institutional arenas, who take up the issues raised by social movement and then facilitate the process through which such issues are translated into substantive policy change. Here NGOs function as the main gatekeepers to funding, training, expertise, lobbying and other support that turns a local campaign into a mechanism for change.

- Joint Effect Model (Giugni and Passy 2000 also Martin 2001; Kane 2003)

This type of model argues that public opinion and political alliances play a crucial role in the process through which social movements can bring about policy changes. Social movements take advantage of the public opinion favourable to their cause and the presence of powerful allies in the organisations responsible for decision making, during the early stage of a campaign. Strategically, such an approach attempts to ensure that claims are directed through powerful networks able to *enact* change, and with public support which acts as a *justification* for change. In more simplistic terms, the model attempts to multiply the effects of public opinion and ties with political allies.

The conclusion of Giugni and Passy's extensive research, by means of time-series analyses of the mobilisation of ecology, antinuclear, and peace movements in the United States between 1975 and 1995, found that these models did not have a substantial impact on public policy. Their statistics (see tables 1-5 Giugni and Passy 2000: 31-35) confirming that the direct effect model has little explanatory power, except, perhaps in gaining minor concessions, while the mediated-effect model is not supported by the empirical evidence, both in its public opinion and political alliances

variants. The joint-effect model fitted their data better (see table 6 and 7 Giugni and Passy 2000: 36-37).

> [O]ur analysis provides two main findings: the minor impact of public opinion and the crucial role played by political alliances. To begin with the first of these two results, contrary to what several previous works have maintained, public opinion is generally not a strong support for social movements (Giugni and Passy 2000: 24)

They further argue that public opinion has a low impact on policy, which can be explained in either one of two ways, depending upon the perspective taken to democracy:

- With a pluralist view of democracy: political authorities only respond to shifts in public opinion if the issue at hand has an electoral saliency

- With an elitist view of democracy: public opinion has a minor role because the political elites are generally not responsive to the shifts in public opinion or, indeed social movement activities.

While Giugni and Passy's argument is based on strong statistical evidence, the themes chosen (ecology, antinuclear, and peace movements and their indexes – spending on environmental protection, nuclear power plants, defence) are at the "complex, large and overtly political" end of the social movements spectrum, which makes their analysis less appropriate to the type of social movements for which greater consensus and more concise argument exist. These examples are also located almost entirely within the domain of developed country examined. The research does, however, highlight the importance of mediation, by NGOs in combination with political alliances, public opinion and a well framed campaign. There are, though, other factors that have been identified in the research literature that impact on success. The paper will now turn to some of these factors.

Other Factors that Impact on Success

Other research emphasise a range of other factors that help to explain the effectiveness of a cause or campaign. The paper will examine some of these case studies before indicating the barriers to that need to be addressed in order to develop an effective campaign.

In a recent and extensive piece of comparative research, Lee Ann Banaszak (2003) examines the policy success and failure through an analysis of different aspects of the women's movement. Her research is particularly interesting as she uses extensive research with which to examine much of the key literature outlined above. Banaszak examines 48 US states and 25 Swiss cantons to make a comparative study between the women's movement in Switzerland and that of the USA. She generates a large amount of empirical evidence to produce a very weak conclusion: movement tactics, beliefs, and values are critical in understanding why political movements succeed or fail. She argues that the Swiss women's suffrage movement's belief in consensus politics and local autonomy and their reliance on government parties for information limited their tactical choices. In comparison, the USA women's suffrage movement,

with its alliances to the abolition, temperance, and progressive movements, overcame beliefs in local autonomy and engaged in a wider array of confrontational tactics in the struggle for the vote.

The argument is then reinforced with a re-evaluation of the role of the state, which Banaszak argues is the missing link in our understanding of success and failure of social movements. For example, though the state's relationship to social movements has become a focus of the social movement literature (Birnbaum 1988; Flam 1994; Jenkins and Klandermans 1995; Tarrow 1998), these accounts tend to situate movements as dependent actors outside the state, a view Banaszak identifies in the work of Tilly (1973; 1975; 1978). According to Banaszak, the literature typically discusses the state and a social movement as two separate entities engaged in confrontational interactions. Views of the state and its role in interacting with social movements differ. She identifies some authors who suggest that the state is a coherent entity that does not change over time (Kitschelt 1986; Birnbaum 1988) while others who argue that the state is an amalgamation of actors with potentially different relationships to social movements that change over time, through interaction (Flam 1994; della Porta and Rucht 1995; Tarrow 1998). Banaszak argues that the state is a key actant in social movements – as the target of social movement demands for change, the facilitator or repressor of protest, the enforcer of policy outcomes, or an ally or opponent in the implementation of change, and should not be characterised as separate from the movement because it is part of the political environment that movements encounter. Banaszak's argument about the success of the women's movement is condensed in a later publication:

> The women's movement presence within the state also provided additional opportunities, which might have been absent if the movement had existed solely outside the state. Networks of feminists in the federal bureaucracy in the late 1960s gave the movement access to information about women pressing equal employment claims against corporations. This information allowed the women's movement to press for social change using the courts (often using lawyers whose day jobs were in the federal bureaucracy). It also helped the movement identify opportunities within government (i.e. an EEOC charged with protecting women that ignored its mandate) that directly led to protest politics (Banaszak 2003: 33)

Curiously though, Banaszak is constrained in attributing too much success to the women's movement because success would imply the end of the process as a social movement, making her feminist perspective redundant. The work does not explain why movements fail or succeed but rather speculates that the state has been reconfigured in such a way as to advance the feminist agenda as well as posing a threat to any successes that have been achieved. The research is also peculiar in that the constituency examined (women) encompass half of the people in the most powerful stratified grouping –developed world, the middle class, etc – and, is supported by so many different NGOs, political parties, lobby groups that success can

be attributed to a large number of factors[2]. The research does, though, raise the issue of when a campaign is finished. This issue will be examined later in this paper.

Examining other themes that impact on campaigns in a more tangible way, is an issue that can be found in one of the earlier key texts in the social movements literature.

In their book on social movements and poverty Piven and Cloward (1977) identified three central themes in understanding the impact of movements: disruption, electoral calculations, and the reverberations of protest.

Disruption, for example strikes, boycotts, and voter defection, were deemed important because "some of the poor are sometimes so isolated from significant institutional participation that the only 'contribution' they can withhold is that of quiescence in civil life: they can riot" (Piven and Cloward 1977: 24) but they also stated that the political impact of institutional disruptions depends upon electoral conditions. For example, disruptive protests will force concessions only when the calculus of electoral instability favours the protestors. This depends not only on the preferences of those who are protesting but also on trends in the sympathy the protesters can generate in public opinion. Empirically, Piven and Cloward found that the most useful way to think about the effectiveness of protest is to examine the disruptive effects on institutions of different forms of mass defiance, and then to examine the political reverberations of those disruptions.

Piven and Cloward identified three interrelated themes in explaining the emergence of social movements: beliefs, behaviour, and political opportunities "people have to perceive the deprivation they experience as both wrong and subject to redress" (Piven and Cloward 1977: 12) or develop a "cognitive liberation" as Doug McAdam termed such a perception (see McAdam 1982). This process involves the loss of legitimacy of the prevailing system, the agitation for rights, typically within a discourse of change, combined with a feeling of efficacy (see Piven and Cloward 1977: 3-5)

Piven and Cloward also argue that the decline of a social movement is something that it out of the hands of the leadership once the protest loses momentum and loss of influence and interest, instead "they can only try to win whatever can be won while it can be won" (Piven and Cloward 1977: 37). They use the failure of the National Welfare Rights Organization to illustrate their point, arguing that it didn't utilize the momentary unrest among the poor to obtain the maximum concessions possible in return for an end to the civil unrest, though this type of failure is not, they argue, the same as the decline of the movement:

> "The fires of protest had died out and organizers probably could not have rekindled them… the era of protest had inexorably come to a close" (Piven and Cloward 1977: 335).

While this paper had an impact in explaining why strategies succeed in different circumstances, it did not explain *why* participation and collective action were so closely intertwined.

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[2] Almost every organisation of any stature has a policy on gender equality. The causes, consequences and successes of such policies are difficult to assess, particularly in *having* the policy is seen by some as success in itself.

Jenny Pearce (2004) attempts to address this question in her research and argues that collective action and public participation are complimentary strategies, as exemplified by her research in Latin America:

> The bid for autonomy of the social activist from traditional political leaderships and the formal realm of politics is not 'anti political' but, she argues, deeply political, if politics and the complex questions of how to organise society and distribute its resources must respond, to use Habermasian language, to the 'lifeworld' rather than impose themselves bureaucratically upon it (Pearce 2004: 502)

Collective action, for example civil disobedience, and protest, can, she argues, be conceptualised as mechanisms which publicise the key problems, such as the lack of consensus around resource allocation, or corruption and enable "channels for formulating public opinion that can potentially challenge direct populist appeals to the 'mass'" ((Pearce 2004: 502) but also facilitate the emergence of future political representation, challenge deficits in the system by collective action. However, she argues that collective action needs democracy to ensure inclusion at all and thus social activists must be democratic even if there are problems with democratic arrangements at the political level.

In relation to Pearce's findings, other research examine in more detail the need for a democratic framework in mobilisation of public opinion. Maryjane Osa and Cristina Corduneanu-Huci, (2003) using a comparative sociology perspective, examined twenty-four cases of occurrence/non-occurrence of mobilisation in non-democratic states to determine conditions of political opportunity in high-risk authoritarian contexts. They identify specific configurations of conditions that constitute political opportunity in non-democracies, in particular that such opportunities are sensitive to conditions created by divided elites, changes in repression, media access, influential allies, and social networks, of which media access and social networks are often sufficient conditions for producing mobilisation in non-democratic states.

Osa and Corduneanu-Huci's research is complimentary to another piece of research examining drives for collective action lacking democratic outlets. Through the use of protest event, archival, and secondary sources on El Salvador between 1962 and 1981, Paul Almeida (2003) examines the outbreak and forms of two protest waves that are generated by the "temporal sequencing of political opportunity and threat environments" (Almeida 2003: 345). Almeida's work makes use of Tilly's (1978) and Goldstone and Tilly's (2001) mobilisation models, which argue that two factors drive expanded collective action:

- opportunity
- threat

In recent years political opportunity variables have received much more attention than threat variables in the social movement literature (see, for example McAdam 1982; Tarrow 2001). In addition, Almeida points out that in standard political process models threat is often incorporated within the concept of political opportunity as the negative side of opportunity associated with declining protest (Goldstone and Tilly

2001). However, with the move to extend political process theory to authoritarian contexts, we find that protest is not driven solely by responsive political institutions and relatively facilitative governments. In order to analyze the roles of political opportunity and threat dimensions in contributing to increased contention Almeida conceptually separates the two terms, developing indicators of threat as political process scholars have previously done for political opportunity. Tilly (1978) defines "opportunity" as the likelihood that challengers will enhance their interests or extend existing benefits if they act collectively. In contrast, "threat" can be thought of as the probability that existing benefits will be taken away or new harms inflicted if challenging groups fail to act collectively. Viewing opportunity and threat as ideal types, Almeida argues that groups may either be driven by positive environmental cues and institutional incentives to push forward new demands and extend benefits (i.e., political opportunity) or be pressed into action in fear of losing current goods, rights, and safety (i.e., threat).

> The case of El Salvador offers insight into a central theoretical puzzle in current research on protest waves and revolutions in authoritarian contexts that employ political process/opportunity models: How is large-scale rebellion possible in repressive regimes when the most often cited conditions in the political environment are the exact reverse of those associated with mass protest in democratic states? (Almeida 2003: 386)

Almeida answers this question by considering the role of political opportunity periods. The possibility of rebellion is, he argues, Almeida enabled by:

> periods of political liberalization/political opportunity and organization building before a regime becomes exclusive and repressive. With the exception of an infusion of resources from elite allies, transnational networks, or foreign states, it would otherwise be extraordinarily difficult for regime challengers to establish organizational infrastructures capable of sustained resistance to authoritarian rule. Political opportunity periods not only encourage an escalation in orderly forms of protest activities in authoritarian settings, as shown in previous research, but also stimulate the formation of enduring civic organizations. These organizational infrastructures persevere in the political environment long after the political reforms responsible for their establishment fade away. (Almeida 2003: 386-387)

Therefore, according to Almeida's research, political opportunity structures, and path dependency, are important factors. The question concerning *how* movements are context-dependent, and the way this is turned into strategy is a more complex issue. It is important, for example, if a campaign is transnational, and the campaigners hope to provoke mobilisation in both arenas, which might necessitate two entirely different campaigns. However, the concept of political opportunity structure is, according to Gamson and Meyer, "in danger of becoming a sponge that soaks up every aspect of the social movement environment" (Gamson and Meyer 1996: 275). Or, as Goodwin and Jasper (2003), argue, it promises to explain too much at the macro level, effectively neglecting the importance of the agency of the activists at the micro level, which is where a campaign needs to be more focussed.

Conclusion: what Counts as Success?

The success of a campaign and the factors that are said to underpin this success are further complicated by what counts as a successful outcome of a campaign. To use the example of new social movements, many of the campaigns emphasise that changes in lifestyle or culture are more important than changes in public policy or improving the group's economic advantage, often as the actors in these movements are the new middle class or academics and professionals, who already have economic advantage and are more effectively served by existing public policy. Actual measures of success are difficult to assess when the objectives of such movements are so varied.

However, according to Paul Burstein and April Linton, following an exhaustive survey of the key literature on political parties, interest groups and social movements, even when considering the differences in objectives, there is little evidence that such groupings have more impact than other organisations.

> Virtually all sociologists and political scientists publishing in the top journals hypothesize that political parties, interest groups and SMOs influence public policy, and it is safe to assume that they generally expect the impact to be substantial. This hypothesis is not as well supported by the data as we might expect (Burstein and Linton 2002: 398)

They go on to conclude that not only is the research not supported by data, but that the influence is not particularly powerful, even by those looking for influence to be strong:

> Our most striking result — that the likelihood of a political organization directly affecting policy is only around 50-50 — indicates that researchers should not take organizations' direct influence on policy outcomes for granted. Not only is this result the product of a decade's worth of articles in the best journals, but there are plausible theoretical arguments quite consistent with it as well. (Burstein and Linton 2002: 400)

This is not surprising – if this review of the literature has indicated anything, then it is that success and failure are influenced by complex interdependent factors, in situations which are frequently unprecedented, where information is incomplete and interests/motivations from social actors cannot be reduced to simple narratives.

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