



Where international politics fail, can visual art help?

A case study based on the Congo Tribunal Documentary, demonstrating how visual tools are essential in raising awareness on global issues for the global citizen of the 21st Century

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Academic year: 2018-2019

Masters International Relations, specialization Culture & Politics

Date submission: 4th January, 2018

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1 Introduction

The 9/11 attacks in the US elicited and evoked immense amounts of media attention, whereas the conflict in Congo has received little global attention. The death toll in Congo between 1998 and 2004 is estimated to be around 4 million (Turner, 2007), that is more than 1300 times higher than the estimated death toll from 9/11 (DeBord, 2018). Therefore, why do certain conflicts gain so much more media attention in the international community, and how does this inform or fail to inform the global citizen?

This thesis aims to explain why global visual culture has been powerful in shaping the opinion of the global population, and why documentaries can be a beneficial medium to convey *factual truth* and facilitate *reflection* and *deliberation* for the global citizen. Essentially it is based on an extensive literature review regarding global visual culture, including but not limited to; *the role of visuals in raising awareness, citizenship, democracy, deliberative democracy, global citizenship, the CNN effect, processing of information, how citizenship and democracy are challenged by digital media, speed and documentaries*. This will in turn be used to reflect upon how documentaries can be a powerful visual tool to raise awareness regarding global conflicts.

Despite the vast amount of literature on genocide, war and conflict studies and the impact of those in the future, there is little academic literature on the media effects of documentaries on the understanding of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the awareness of the ongoing conflict. Existing literature focuses on film being used to portray the events and the portrayal of the history of the genocide, war or massacre, such as the Rwandan genocide (Sontag, 2004; Dodds, 2008; Friend, 2007) and the Indonesian mass killings of 1965 and 1966 (Philpott, 2017). However, there is little literature that discovers the relation between documentaries and the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is more incentive in the field of International relations to shift towards the role of media, especially visual culture in relation to global politics (Bleiker, 2009).

As such, this thesis could give a valuable contribution to the existing literature for scholars in International Relations (IR). Furthermore, this thesis aims to give greater insight for those who seek to gain a broader understanding of the worlds' issues and what it entails to be a global citizen. Ultimately, this thesis will try to encourage the reader to see past what is visible and invisible in the news provided to us from the government, media outlets and social media, and how documentaries can give a deeper understanding of complex issues that are often overlooked or simplified in the previously mentioned mediums. For instance, the

economic war in Congo. Furthermore, this thesis will in particular go into details regarding how the global citizenship and democracy are challenged by digital media today.

Our understanding of the world we live in today is increasingly understood through the digital media we consume everyday such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. It was estimated that by the end of 2014, there were more mobile phones than people on the planet (Kaempf, 2018). Thus, the global media landscape has shifted to immediate fast-paced information, shared to almost all areas of the world. This fast-pace of information sharing shapes our understanding of global challenges such as war, poverty, famine and violations of human rights. Nonetheless, the depictions of these atrocities are not always visible and the public may not comprehend what is happening due to the lack of or distanced representation.

Furthermore, the media reports on certain conflicts, massacres or tragedies are ephemeral. If the amount of deaths were proportional to the amount of attention devoted by the media, then the lack of awareness of conflicts such as the Congo is questionable. As mentioned earlier, the 9/11 attacks in the US had more media attention than the deaths of over 4 million Congolese (Turner, 2007). It seems that such conflicts can easily be overlooked by the media when there are no direct consequences to individuals or large corporations. This raises a question of what are the pitfalls of assuming and celebrating the digital media in global politics? In this thesis, I will outline this problem, and argue for why art can help where international politics and traditional media fail. In fact, this thesis will focus on how documentaries as an art form can help, and demonstrates this through the case of the Congo Tribunal Documentary. In short, this can aid in the debate and deliberation of international politics.

The Congo Tribunal, a documentary released in 2017 takes a different approach than most war documentaries to present what happened during three atrocities that occurred as a result of the ongoing conflicts in the Congo, in 2014. These include 1) the displacement of villagers due to mining corporations, 2) disputes between local people and international companies and 3) massacres due to violence. The documentary is based around an unofficial tribunal held in Berlin and Congo where different actors; non-state, governmental and institutional, are given the opportunity to share their side of the issues. In the opinion of the filmmaker Milo Rau, the only way the Congolese people would even have the chance or the consideration of a political and fair trial, was to host a fake tribunal.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Global Visual Culture

In a globalized and technical age, visuals have continuously become more important in the field of humanities and social sciences. In contemporary culture, the realm of images, film and visual have been recognized to be important when observing the ‘real’ world. W.J.T. Mitchell is one of the earliest scholars exploring the pictorial turn and recognized it as being as worthy of the same scrutiny as the concept of language (Mitchell, 2018). The ‘linguistic turn’ was concerned with the role of language regarding culture, theory and everyday life (McKay, 2013), however W.J.T. Mitchell found that images were just as essential. Our understanding of the world has become very much based on what we ‘see’.

Visuals such as photographs, cinema and television influence the way we view the world and how we understand phenomena that are happening around the globe. Particularly the case with our approach to understanding war, humanitarian disasters, protests and election campaigns (Bleiker, 2018). The Pulitzer price-winning photograph taken by Nick Ut captured several children running away from a napalm attack on a village during the Vietnam war in 1972. A Vietnam airplane had accidentally attacked its own civilians. The naked girl in the center, Kim Phuc ripped her burning clothes off whilst running away. This devastating photograph contributed to domestic as well as international opposition towards the US foreign policy; the anti-war sentiment and the skepticism towards wars in the US (Bleiker, 2018). The 11 September 2001 attack is another example of a devastating and impactful visual event. The severity of the event was understood by global audiences through the news media outlets who had broadcasted live shocking images and videos, circulating worldwide immediately via television broadcasters. Our collective conscious has these images engraved in our memory and these images have shaped some of the policies in response to the attack, one of which the War on Terror (Bleiker, 2018).

These visuals of events show how images that surround us are political and change how we interact with today’s world. In this sense images are just as crucial as language, not only because of the content but the challenges that come with them when analyzing or observing visual culture. As visual culture scholar Mitchell observed, visual media are “mixed media” meaning they depend on other communicating practices such that the analysis of the images include an analysis of texts (Mitchell 2018, p. 231). With regards to visual political representation, what needs to be understood is that the images can not be wrong,

untrue or inaccurate. The analysis of the politics of visual representation as David Shim and David Campbell emphasize is not related to the completeness or truthfulness of the representation but rather what they do, their function and the impact of the operation (Shim, 2013).

When it comes to the topic of visual culture within the scope of international relations, several scholars agree that the study of visuals are relevant for critical engagement with areas that are central to the discipline of International relations and the subject namely: war and peace, conflict and cooperation. On the other hand, according to Bleiker (2009), the field of world politics is too serious and risks can not be taken with the leading crises. Scholars such as King, Keohane and Verba (1994) maintain that social scientific methods should be the only process that all research should adhere to as it can give certainty needed to operate through the “metaphorical and legitimate minefields of world politics” (Bleiker, 2009, p. 1). Whereas some are convinced that there is a realist hegemon within IR; where an orthodox wisdom guides the discipline of International relations, there is no room left for other forms of research (Bleiker, 1997). In his earlier work, *Forget IR Theory*, Bleiker (1997) has offered harsh critiques of orthodox IR theory, in other words a critique on realist and positive approaches because these are often considered the rule book of research in IR.

For the gatekeepers of the orthodox IR theories have conducted a set of rules that are considered necessary to conduct ‘good’ scholarly research. King et al. (1994) assert that quantitative and qualitative research are not superior to one another but that they only differ methodologically and on style. The basis of both researches is that they could and should be scientific and systematic, thus the observer and subject should be kept separate (King et al., 1994). My view however, contrary to what King et al. has argued, is that the subject and object should not be separated, that what is observed from ‘reality’ shouldn’t be the only research that deserves to be called knowledge. Thus, I agree with Bleiker’s sentiment when he complains in response to these positivist claims about other research having “no cognitive and empirical merit: they are mere value statements, normative claims, unprovable speculations” (Bleiker, 1997, p. 64).

King et al. (1994) insist that the hypotheses need to be empirically tested before they are even able to contribute to knowledge. These hypotheses have the goal to find ‘facts’ of the ‘real world’ and research is conducted through a set of rules that is relevant to all research. In other words, King et al. support “that social science seeks to arrive at valid inferences by the systematic use of well-established procedures of inquiry” (King et al., 1994, p. 6). Bleiker (1997) protests against this with questions such as “Which facts? Whose ‘Real’ world? What

forms of knowledge?” (Bleiker, 1997, p. 64). In making this comment, Bleiker urges us to rethink what exactly the social sciences are observing and reconsider the fact whether social science is precisely ‘value-free’ knowledge.

Furthermore, Bleiker (1997) acknowledges that the positivist approach, by definition, pre-determines what topics and issues are worth researching as well as how the research should be conducted. King et al. (1994) have set out rules or criteria which the topic needs to fulfill in order for it to be legitimate for International Relations. These criteria include that the research question that is being researched needs to be ‘important’ in the ‘real world’ and it should contribute to the scholarly literature by advancing, in King et al.’s view, “our collective ability to construct verified scientific explanations of some aspect of the world” (King et al., 1994, p. 15). Although I agree with King et al. that research should contribute to literature and our understanding, I cannot agree on the fact that topics should fulfill the systematic and scientific criteria of knowledge in order for it to be legitimate within the International Relations discipline. In other words, I agree with Bleiker’s criticism that if we were to put all our eggs in one basket; putting all our efforts into one set of knowledge no matter how ground-breaking, our attempts to improve the world will be very minor.

From this perspective, aesthetic sources offer alternative insights into International Relations, specifically a reflective understanding that does not emerge from a systematically applied analysis from social sciences. These insights allow for new ways of reflection and understanding of a political conflict or dilemma, which science-based theories may not be able to cover. Especially in the event of atrocities that need to address human emotion, understanding and handling, it is necessary to look beyond the framework of orthodox international relations alone (Bleiker, 2009). The insights that the art form, photograph, music or film stimulate is just as relevant to analyze as the study of the image or artefact itself (Bleiker, 2009). In other words, the message that is portrayed by the image or artefact itself and the interpretation of the artefact or image are relevant to the critical understanding. Roland Bleiker contends that the existing political theories should use aesthetic sources. This will be further elaborated later when the role of visuals is discussed. The *Aesthetics and World Politics* (2009) clearly explains the valuable relationship of art and world politics, and why the two should not be studied independently from one another.

When researching the relations between aesthetics and politics, Bleiker (2009) contends that a photograph is a good starting point to understand the relevance of the role of visuals within international relations. Susan Sontag (2004) claims that through the medium of photography various opportunities for many uses arise. She asserts that photographs of

atrocities may provoke opposing responses, bring awareness or a reminder that horrible things happen (Sontag, 2004). As an example, she presents the possible situation that if an Israeli Jew were to see a photograph of a child mutilated from an attack in downtown Jerusalem, the first judgement would be that it is a Jewish child who was murdered by a Palestinian suicide-bomber. On the contrary if a Palestinian were to be presented with the same picture but by a tank attack in Gaza, the image would be interpreted as a Palestinian child murdered by the Israelis. According to Sontag “all photographs wait to be explained or falsified by their captions.” (Sontag, 2004, p. 6). In other words, Sontag contends that photography can evoke many thoughts, emotions and opinions which diversifies the political debate. The multiple interpretations of images are better than other forms of analyzing because it evokes critical thought and questions that may not even be considered if other forms of analysis were only to be used.

Photographs are taken at a certain point in time, at a certain angle and a focus. These choices make the aesthetic quality and need to be interpreted. There are two messages in the photograph: the connotated and denotated. The denoted message is the mentioned comparisons of the techniques and representation of the visual image. The connoted message is how the photograph is read and interpreted within the known knowledge and communication. Therefore Bleiker (2009) claims the viewing and interpretation of the image is influenced by our previous experiences but also the societal norms of what are accepted as values and visual traditions. These diverse interpretations offer a global perspective on what is being portrayed in the image.

Moreover, Bleiker (2001) argues that aesthetic approaches the gap that occurs between the form of representation and the object that is sought to be represented. The gap is not seen as, in Bleiker’s own words, “a threat to knowledge and political stability” (Bleiker 2001, p. 512) but aesthetics realizes the difference that occurs between what is represented and the representation, which is where politics is located. Bleiker’s demonstration depicts that even the works of a social scientist and a painter, both present their objects through a specific mode of representation. He claims that “even a naturalist painting is still a form of representation” (Bleiker, 2001, p. 512). This is because of the aesthetic choices by the artist. He takes the painting of a pipe by René Magritte as an example, where she famously drew a pipe with the words under “This is not a pipe” in French. The argument Bleiker (2001) emphasizes here is that what is clear to the viewer is Magritte’s painting is indeed not a pipe, but a representation of the pipe. This draws attention to the relationship between the drawing and the actual object, which involves various interpretations and subjective choices that does

not involve the actual object. Bleiker's theory sheds light on the difficult problem that no empirical analysis of social sciences can represent a political event separately from the chosen form to represent the analysis. This representation is full of choices and interpretations of these choices, thus Bleiker 2001 reminds us that this is a political exercise.

While the examples above are based on static photographs or paintings, Bleiker (2018) examines the more recent key concepts and issues in the digital age in *Visual Global Politics* to understanding the issues at stake with visual global politics. This book pushes our understanding of international relations in relation to the role of visual representations as he challenges the idea of seeing visual representations as political forces themselves, rather than just a representation or illustration. I will be using Bleiker's book as a framework throughout this thesis because in the words of Bleiker himself, one of the main proponents of visual political culture is that it is "a political engagement with the visual and a visual engagement with the political" (Bleiker, 2018, p. 4). According to this view the visual can be political in itself but the study of the visual and its relation to politics makes it political as well.

Besides Bleiker there are more scholars within the field of visuals and politics. Scholars such as W.J.T. Mitchell had displayed why visuals have become a reliable and important way of learning of the world (Mitchell, 2018), while others have extensively researched the relationship between cinema, foreign policy, war, and the visualization of conflicts. Michael Shapiro asserts that the aesthetic representations of geopolitics need to be analyzed with film theory as well as philosophy. As a film festival juror himself, Shapiro examined the ways in which documentaries and feature film function as counter forms to the contemporary study of war, especially government policies such as "war on terror". In other words, he contends for a cultural intervention with regards to geopolitical relations (Shapiro, 2008). Furthermore, Cynthia Weber (2006) analyzed ten war films that were released after 9/11 and how these evoke debate with regards to US foreign policy and what it means to an American. For example, Pearl Harbour, Collateral Damage, Minority Report and Behind Enemy Lines revealed the gap between scholarly research on self-understanding and national identity. Her findings criticize the exercise of masculinity and the necessary need to recognize the potential of the feminine when addressing moral politics (Weber, 2006). These two scholars demonstrate how the memories of wars can not be separated from the chosen representations of the war in various films (Bleiker, 2009).

In addition, other scholars have studied the impact of photography and the understanding of colonial pasts. David Campbell examined how photography can reinforce the colonial stereotypes through standardized photographs. This in turn reflects how we

construct our identity and relationship with others (Bleiker, 2009). These scholars are several examples of the many who have contributed to the academia of visual culture and international relations (Bleiker, 2018). Having just argued that the various forms of art and its visual power is relevant for the study of global politics, I want now to complicate the point by analyzing the danger of the speed of information sharing via digital media and international politics. We assume transparency in a democracy and forget about the position of the news media, thus global citizenship and democracy are challenged by digital media. This effect has impact on the global understanding of global issues, which will be further elaborated throughout this literature review.

2.2 Visuals

Visuals and artefacts have always been used to capture and share moments or aspects of human life to others. They are a ‘witness’ of the past and present time, showing the past and its’ significance for today’s political communities (Bleiker, 2018). It is not only that visuals do things, but artefacts and images can be political forces themselves. They can shape politics just as they can depict it, shaping public opinion and societal values. Just as Rockwell’s “The Problem We All Live With” of a girl walking to school accompanied by American bodyguards (Bleiker, 2018). Besides this, another example is the sculpture of the Yoruba man with a bicycle which invites us to think about the colonialist background of Nigeria, through the representation of an African man riding a bicycle (Appiah, 1991). Film is known to have shaped societal values based on narratives of superheroes and villains. Drones have been a key factor in strategy of war, where the images of the war can be spread around. Visuals of drones can abstract the context and avoid the moral ambiguity that may be questioned by marking the ‘other’ (Wall & Monahan, 2011).

The visual politics goes past the traditional media outlets because we live in a moment where images surround everything we do. The digital media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram all have important roles when it comes to politics. These include the use of these platforms for recruitment purposes, spreading terror by terrorist groups, or protests and campaigns of social justice and against violations of human rights (Bleiker, 2018). Ai Weiwei and Banksy are activists who use their art to visualize their political voices and challenge our way of thinking and representation of the political. The political content lie in the aesthetic form itself but is not necessarily immediately recognized or too explicit. When looking at aesthetics and politics, it is important to make a distinction between art that lead to a better understanding and those that simply show a political message as Graham

asserts (Bleiker, 2009). The arts that lead to a better understanding can open up reflection which would bring in more political and ethical insights, whilst the latter is a way of bringing forth an opinion (Bleiker, 2009). Our governments and media can not tell us “what to think, but can only tell us what to think about” (Entman, 1989, p. 349). In other words, the arts that lead to an understanding provoke political debate and enables for deliberation on how to think about the topic instead of simply thinking of the topic. Another relevant argument here is that there is a difference between “what happened” and “that which is said to have happened” (Trouillot, 2015, p. 21). Trouillot’s point demonstrates the importance of analyzing the representation as well as the topic presented. Consequently, critically reflecting on what information is presented on what happened and how the information is shared urges us to look at the political messages and participate in political debate.

The same can be applied to our understanding of the world and world politics. With regards to a photograph or painting, the aesthetic choices form the interpretation and in turn the political exercise. It also reveals more about the interpreter and their choices than the object of interpretations. Choi (2015) contends that seeing the suffering of others builds up on the sentiment that the audience is able to do something to relieve the suffering of the ‘others’ because of their position as an outsider. This is problematic because through this distance, the spectator is able to have a good feeling through the empowerment of knowing they are not the victims and are capable of helping these sufferers. Choi asserts that by rendering the condition of suffering in the sufferers, the “inaccessible nature”, as Choi writes, of the experiences such as poverty or violence becomes a problem (2015, p. 98). Choi is right that these spaces between the suffering and the representations of the suffering, along with the viewer and the victim, need to be reduced. In fact, this reduction relates to the concept of global citizenship where the limits of nation-state citizenship are no longer relevant in terms of global suffering. Therefore, this reduction is needed to act responsibly towards the suffering ‘other’, such as a global citizen. Thus, aesthetic approaches highlight how we construct and understand our world (Bleiker, 2009). Therefore, visuals are more than a medium of communication, they are part of a larger discussion of meaning and interpretation – an element of politics.

2.3 Citizenship

Being an active citizen is time-consuming because it requires time and effort to be fully informed of what’s going on in the world, both nationally and globally. Citizenship was understood as the relationship between nation-state and the individual, and the sense of

belonging was connected to the reliance on a community (Marshall, 1987). Coleman and Blumler (2009) acknowledge that being an active citizen also involves finding the reliable information, how to obtain information from different perspectives for decent discussions and reflecting on how the governments share the information. Furthermore, they emphasize that knowing where to find reliable information and being able to come to your own judgements is an important aspect of being an active citizen. I agree that these are essential because the individual will be knowledgeable and able to contribute by voicing their concern, which is part of the democratic process. Who the public can trust and whether the elected representatives will fulfill and serve the interests of the public is fundamental to the reliable information (Coleman and Blumler, 2009). When it comes to the topic of active citizenship, it is necessary to be able to voice our perspectives and contribute to the debates with the possibility of having an impact. Where this argument usually ends, however, is on the question of whether it's always possible or easy to be a well-informed citizen.

Drawing on the works by Lupia and McCubbins, Norris and Vergez and Caddy, Coleman and Blumler (2009, p. 42) they state that citizens rarely have faith in the elected politicians, know too little about the formal politics and feel that their voice will not be heard in the decision-making processes and policy formation. Therefore, Coleman and Blumler (2009) contend that it should be no shock that less people decide to vote and politically engage in campaigns to bring changes that the citizens believe are important. This challenges the democracy, where it is expected in a democracy to involve the public.

2.4 Democracy

The challenges that are faced to be a well-informed citizen relate to the issues of identity, culture and morals, which are associated to the identification of a democracy. In this age the multi-media saturated democracies have made it possible for perceived greater transparency in contemporary democracies because of the easily accessible and transmittable information via televisions, laptops and mobile phones (Chou, 2018). This sentiment has grown so much that “transparency has become synonymous with democracy” as Hollyer, Rozendorff and Vreeland state (Chou, 2018, p. 90). This is a danger because we may take for granted the fact that information is available to us, but this does not mean we are able to deliberate and be well-informed citizens who ‘see’ who our representatives are and what they are doing. If we are to keep those in charge as accountable, we should be aware of this illusion of transparency. Chou (2018) emphasizes Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* findings where Tocqueville implicitly demonstrates the visual dimension to the politics of democracy. As

stated in Chou, Tocqueville claims that democracy reveals and conceals but that slow observation was needed to see both what is exposed and hidden. This contradicts the claim contemporary democracies being transparent (Chou, 2018). Although exposures of hidden government secrets are now shared on Twitter feeds which challenges the power relations, even more so with the scrutiny of monitory democracy. Monitory platforms have been developed to undermine the government's efforts in keeping their private matters hidden; this was necessary to make the democracy fully transparent (Keane, 2009). However, Chou disagrees with the notion of monitory democracy adding to the concept of transparency in democracy. He claims the same techniques used for monitory democracy enables government to make their private matters disappear which complicates the relationship between democracy and transparency even more.

On the one hand, some argue that the distinctive characteristics that belong to democracy is "openness, accountability and representativeness" (Chou, 2018, p. 90). On the other hand, however, others argue that there is a constant "veil of ambiguity" that is essential to democracy which is necessary for the common good; communicating different things to a different audience makes sense. What is being communicated to your wife shouldn't be communicated to your children or your boss (Flinders, 2012). This builds up on the fact that it is necessary to tamper with the truth to hide what is unpleasant and displeasing from the public. Thus, the free flow of information in democracy would be less free. In short, transparency is merely an illusion as time and transparency are fundamental to how we perceive and see things (Chou, 2018). Building on this, Chou (2018) contends that contemporary democracies have not become more transparent.

2.5 Deliberative democracy

Despite the easy access and transmission of information within contemporary democracies, transparency is no longer its strongest characteristic. Although digital media have given the opportunity for us to challenge and comment on the authorities, it has also given the government the ability to control information. In return, we may find ourselves feeling frustrated due to the sentiment of inability to change the policies and decisions of the governments. This refers back to the concept of transparency but instead there is a "veil of ambiguity". Coleman and Blumler (2009) reminds us of this by mentioning the countless surveys and interviews with citizens that have expressed their feeling of being left out, disrespected and voiceless. These citizens have increasingly lost their trust in the politicians thus it is essential that democracies allow for more deliberation by the public in the political

processes, such as participatory democracy that has increasingly developed in the UK in recent years (House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee in Coleman & Blumler 2009). Despite the fact that many liberal political theorists would disagree with the extent to which it is important to have a deliberating public instead of political representatives, who make all the decisions on the public's behalf, Coleman and Blumler (2009) suggest three propositions where most liberal political theorists would agree upon.

These propositions are 1) that the competing arguments about policy need to have fair debates so the best chance of decisions can be made, 2) political elites should not be the only ones who are involved in these debates as involving the public through television, media, newspapers and opinion polling is necessary, and 3) direct participation with parties, representatives and public meetings are needed for possible dialogue between the elite, politicians and public. The democratic decisions for policies and decisions are best when the public understands and agrees with them and by doing so, allowing the public to take ownership of the policies and decisions.

This is where I would like to bring in deliberative democracy, I acknowledge Coleman and Blumler's (2009) argument for deliberative democracy, that when the public is involved they are less divided and more civic. Deliberative democrats argue according to Coleman and Blumler, when open discussions of topics that could affect the citizen locally, nationally and globally enables them to evaluate the best arguments because they are open to other views. Deliberative democrats also claim that decision-makers will benefit from public deliberation because they can contribute their information and knowledge from their individual expertise which may otherwise be unheard of. These experiences allow for a different dimension in the debates, such as public morality, which may not even come to the table had there only been elites. Thus, Coleman and Blumler are right that public input legitimizes the democratic decisions.

Arguably, there are objections to deliberative democracy and the limitations to involving the public. The possibility of physically involving different groups of a society to join in on a conversation may face natural barriers. It may not be feasible for every individual of the community to physically join all the debates and discussions. Furthermore, the question arises whether the public's intellectual and cognitive competence would allow them to engage with complex questions of policy. The competence of the public may not be able to handle the complex social issues that need to be discussed. This points out the next point political scientists argue, which is whether citizens are able to come up with relevant policy solutions for these difficult topics or if it's best to leave that to the political aggregation.

Besides this, oppositions of the deliberative democracy stress whether or not the deliberative democracy is just a disguise for a range of practices that keep the powerful at the top and the public in their place (Coleman & Blumler, 2009).

Although I can agree with the opposition of deliberative democracy up to a point, I cannot accept the overriding assumption that public understanding and deliberation is not relevant for debates and political decision-making. Anyone familiar with the communication technologies we have today should agree that these have closed the gap between social space and physical distance which may have challenged the public deliberation, mediation and growth of relationships.

Striving towards a more deliberative democracy is the conclusion that Coleman and Blumler (2009) contend. I can agree on the fact that the deliberative democracy will encourage more dialogue between citizens, the elite and policy-makers. Most of the issues will allow for public debate with regards to policy formation, legislation and policy scrutiny. Coleman and Blumler warn that there have been too many cases where the public has been deliberated on issues only to find out the decision was made prior to these interactions. Thus, their thoughts on the issues would have no influence on finding resolutions at all, leaving the citizens in a sense of lost hope, despair and resentment. If Coleman and Blumler are right that this sentiment should not progress, as I agree they are, then we need to reassess the popular assumption that public deliberation should only be used as a formality. Public deliberation should be incorporated within the structures of policy-formation procedures, without any manipulation by politicians or elites. The evidence shows that participations in deliberative processes feel political efficacy; feel that they are being listened to and have some kind of influence.

At the same time that I agree that not every citizen will have the cognitive ability to come up with solutions for difficult policy decisions, I also argue it is important for the democracy to incorporate different perspectives especially from visuals and art when coming to a decision. This does require utilizing the technologies, which will support the democratic interaction, that is suggested by deliberative democracy and incorporate it in our society in a meaningful matter. Coleman and Blumler (2009) suggest pluralist techniques likely to be the best for a diverse population with regards to debating various topics. The suggestions include:

“access to balanced information, an open agenda, time to consider matters extensively, freedom from manipulation or coercion, a rule-based framework for discussions, participation by an inclusive sample of

citizens, scope for free interaction between participants and recognition of differences between participants but rejection of status-based prejudice.” (Coleman & Blumler, 2009, p. 40)

On the other hand, however, others argue that having to be informed of every issue or challenge may lead to compassion fatigue (Moeller, 2018). Reading or seeing too much horror for too long can trigger the belief that the reader or observer themselves are helpless and do not have the means to do something meaningful to stop the tragedy. Thus, they stop the intake of these messages, images or videos. Moeller (2018) also claims that compassion fatigue can occur as a response to the continuous confrontation that the viewer does not go beyond their personal borders to contribute to resolving someone else’s tragedy, by even putting little effort or investing some of their time. It is because of compassion fatigue that Moeller suggests media have turned towards using celebrities in their stories, to keep them from losing their readers. One example that Moeller uses to demonstrate this was when Angelina Jolie (actress, director and activist), was also special envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, wrote an op-ed in early 2015 for the New York Times about the Iraqi and Syrian refugees who needed desperate help. Her article included two images; one which showed Jolie (not glamorously dressed) in a refugee camp smiling as she reaches out to shake hands and a drawn image of sad children in a city of UNHCR tents. The choice of these images raises concern to the editorial and journalists’ decisions to media’s coverage of international crises. One of the questions that was raised by Moeller is “Shouldn’t the public have been given some ‘real’ glimpse of the horrors about which Jolie wrote rather than a cartoon version of traumatized children?” (Moeller, 2018, p. 78). I reaffirm the arguments given by Moeller which urges us to question who was actually the topic of the news article, was it Jolie or the Syrians? This is one of the many examples where celebrities have been used to attract audiences to read articles of tragedies in a distant place. Moeller is right that once the public has seen the climax of horrific images of an event, it may only have short-term benefits but not long-term benefits; the public doesn’t want to keep seeing the horrible images.

As a result from this critical thought on media reports using celebrities, the suggestion of access to balanced information entails that the deliberative exercises are focused on knowing what the citizens’ opinions are, but this can only happen once they have become informed to a modest level. The information that is shared with the citizens

need to be “comprehensive, balanced and accessible” (Coleman & Blumler, 2009, p. 40). The time to consider and deliberate is essential to the understanding of the information as it allows the individual to figure out where they stand and think through the topic. I contend these are the two important factors when talking about understanding and deliberating on global issues. Therefore, media outlets need to push back their fear of losing their readers to compassion fatigue.

2.6 Global citizenship

The concept of global citizenship challenges these traditional meanings of being a well-informed citizen. Some scholars argue that globalization has challenged national polities and cultures which have now become part of the global flows, but on the other hand, Goldblatt, Held, McGrew and Perraton (1997) claim the nation state will not be fully eliminated. Despite this, the evidence shows that the power structures have shifted and the global challenges are no longer bound by borders. It is no longer the case that nations are the only ones seeking power and legitimacy (Goldblatt et al., 1997). Due to the shift in the power structure, global citizenship will either become a concept that will exist alongside or replace the national citizenship (Pashby, 2011). According to Schattle (2007) there is critique that global citizenship doesn't serve any function and citizenship still remains closely tied with the nation state structure for the feeling of belonging and participation. The opposition of global citizenship further claim that political participation can only happen in communities where everyone trusts each other to be able to work together to achieve the same goal. Their arguments state that global citizenship can't exist because the responsibilities the citizens have towards their nation and the fact that there can never be a global government (Schattle, 2007).

Nevertheless, the concept of global citizenship is more relevant today because of the challenges we face on global levels such poverty, famine and climate change that lead to suffering. These deserve our attention as the act of engaging and exercising political rights are not only bound by the North-South divide. Furthermore, Shukla (2009) emphasizes that the global citizenship is based on the concept of active involvement and consciousness of global politics, which also take place at the individual level by understanding what is happening on the other side of the world and connecting with individuals around the globe. This understanding and involvement can be encouraged through the different interpretations of visuals and art. Thus, the concept of global citizenship faces challenges that are real and arguably the most significant factor in understanding and contributing to possible solutions

for these global challenges.

2.7 CNN effect

In discussions of visuals in media representations, one controversial issue has been that advocacy journalism is shaping the conduct of states and steering the interventions of humanitarian need, also known as the CNN effect. On the one hand, Robinson (2018) argues that media representations of suffering people were means to pressure policy makers to intervene in humanitarian purposes. This had a large role in initializing Western responses, especially the 24-hour global media such as CNN, who were impacting the global media phenomenon. On the other hand, Robinson contends that the visual used to portray the human suffering were focused on stereotypical images of children and women. Robinson gives two examples to demonstrate this. One of them was an image taken in 1968 during the Nigerian-Biafra war for Time magazine where two children were in full focus on the front cover with the words “Starving Children of the Biafra War”. Secondly, another example that had elicited global responses to suffering was BBC news broadcast during the famine in Ethiopia in 1984. The broadcast lasted ten minutes, showing the viewers death and starvation. The response to these media portrayals were the Live Aid concerts, proving that the power of the media to persuade is very prominent. Images that focus on individuals, rather than big masses enables the viewer to empathize with the victims. This is where the reinforcing images of women and children are used because they are more often understood as those who need protection.

Nevertheless, Robinson (2018) contends that despite the persuasive power of the image itself, the visibility of the humanitarian crisis depends on the amount of media attention it receives. He emphasizes this using the mantra “If it bleeds, it leads” (Robinson, 2018, p. 65) demonstrating how the media uses immediacy, shock factors and the dramatization to bring awareness to the crisis. However, others maintain that the media do not use images as a representation of the human suffering and fail to bring the crises in the spotlight (Robinson, 2018). The absence of images allows for significant distancing and forgetting. This is where I agree with Robinson when he encourages us to be critical and understand the importance of the political dimensions behind humanitarian reporting. As the media is able to create this distance between us and the visual, we do not fully comprehend the shocking amount of deaths caused by atrocities for instance. I argue that documentaries like “The Congo Tribunal” are good tools to encourage us to reflect on these political issues.

Although we should be critical of the images that we see, we should also be critical of what is not shown to us. What happens to the conflicts that have no visual representation or

remain invisible? Robinson (2018) reminds us of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, where the media had presented the massacre as a “regular round of tribal bloodletting” (Robinson, 2018, p. 67). Basically, Robinson warns us that the media depiction of atrocities can be dehumanizing just as much as when it is invisible. Moreover, Robinson mentions how the Democratic Republic of the Congo has received almost to none in Western media reporting. It is only recently that there is a spark of interest to examine the involvement of the British and American government in the conflicts occurring in the Congo according to Robinson. I agree here when he raises the question whether the suffering was purposely not portrayed in the media because it would have invoked criticism on the western world. In sum, it is essential to involve the debate of visuals within the political debate, especially with regards to global challenges such as humanitarian crises, war or poverty.

2.8 Processing of information

As described earlier, the media affect what people “think about” but not what their opinion should be of a certain topic (Entman 1989). Therefore, I assert it is important that the news media outlets do justice to the story and portray it in such a way that it elicits empathy and the reader or viewer is aware of what is going on other parts of the world. However, what happens once the information is available to us, how do we process this information? Entman (1989) contends that information-processing theories explain how attitudes are formed from the interaction with new information and their existing beliefs. Entman himself writes, based on Bennett’s work, that “political thought is “data-driven” by external information and “conceptually-driven” by internal schemas” (Entman, 1989, p. 350). In other words, his point is that people do not fail to think about the news because they only select congruent messages or because they deliberately ignore the media report. He suggests that schemas are not used to filter information that causes any discomfort or unfamiliarity but that the information depends on the salience with their interests and beliefs. Evidence shows that the individual first checks whether the media report is salient to their beliefs, if so, then they will process the information based on routines developed by their personal schema system (Entman, 1989). Entman reminds us that individuals often dismiss reports that aren’t salient to their beliefs but at times may want to read reports they feel are relevant. This may stimulate the individual to form new beliefs or change their pre-existing ones. In Entman’s view “Just because on most matters American have so little knowledge and such weakly anchored beliefs, information provided by the media can significantly shape their attitudes.” (Entman,

1989, p. 351). In making this comment, Entman urges us to realize that information processing is the motivation or manipulation of information that is stored in our memory, thus the information that is selected is the attention. The information that is not chosen to be processed will be forgotten and will not be recalled later. Nevertheless, Entman encourages us to rethink this concept, as the evidence shows that the audience lacks detailed and informative news reports that could shape attitudes, but there may be no attitude to defend due to the lack of knowledgeable information. These conclusions which Entman discusses about processing of information adds weight to the argument that the media has a clear path for significant influence. My own view is that the media must report responsibly on events and issues, since they have such significant influence, so we can recall information and it can help shape our attitudes towards a more global perspective.

2.9 Global citizenship and democracy challenged by digital media

In recent discussions of our ability to experience the promise of digital media in its full diversity, a controversial issue has been that there are limitations and compromises to our ability to do so. From this perspective, Kaempf (2018) has given four reasons why there are limitations.

The first suggestion, Kaempf (2018) contends that the traditional outlets and new media outlets have vast disparity. Others maintain that the younger generations are the driving force behind the new media, so they haven't established long lasting credibility as traditional outlets have when it comes to mass consumption and followership (Kaempf, 2018). The older outlets are trusted more, thus have more political power. Though I concede that traditional news may have more readers due to its credibility, I still maintain that the media outlets being readily accessible very relevant. This is because I do not encourage the dismissal of all new media just for the reason that they are easily accessible. I advocate for access to knowledgeable information, and if this is possible through the new media then the new media outlets are relevant for the sharing and understanding of topics.

The second suggestion involves the fact that digital media is becoming increasingly controlled by the state. Kaempf (2018) warns that the interest of the state and internet economy are what drives the government to monitor, collect and analyze data of its users. This relates back to the monitory mechanisms of Keane discussed earlier, where the government can use the monitory mechanism in their own advantage to keep the "veil of ambiguity". I agree with Kaempf as this suggestion questions the transparency of the

democracy and limits the promise of digital media in our democratic processes.

This third suggestion I contend to be one of the ruling suggestions to the limitations of using digital media in a democracy, namely the use of algorithms. Kaempf (2018) claims these algorithms limit the rotation of diverse information and organizes the information according to its logic, deciding which information is shown online for the digital media users. The algorithms show us what it thinks we want to see, this means we are no longer in charge of what we find relevant. Most of the information will be information that is congruent to our own worldview. I agree with Kaempf that this shifts us further away from the idea of having a diverse worldview. Kaempf himself writes what Mark Zuckerberg responded to a journalist about the algorithms “A squirrel dying in front of your house may be more relevant to your interests right now than people dying in Africa” (Kaempf, 2018, p. 102). In other words, Kaempf’s point is that this does not contribute to the democratic practices. I emphasize that this does not allow us to deliberate on different perspectives and become knowledgeable.

Kaempf’s (2018) last suggestion involves the behavior of the media consumer themselves. The easy access to digital media enables the media user to immense amount of news sources, more so than before but this can be overwhelming. Kaempf warns that the media user will keep looking at media outlets that confirm their existing political preferences. This asserts the processing of information argument, where the user may not want to look at information that could change their political view. I agree that just because there is an endless number of images on digital media, it does not necessarily mean the media user will engage in a critical understanding of the political issues and instead of giving the user a wider perspective, it could give a narrow political position.

2.10 Speed

Despite the limitations of the digital media suggested by Kaempf (2018), Keane’s (2009) theory of monitory mechanism is useful because it sheds light on the difficult problem that seeing past the “veil of ambiguity” is almost impossible without these digital monitory tools. Nevertheless, with the fast-paced, complex and globalized political landscape we live in today, Chou (2018) contends that the only means in which it is possible for citizens to keep up with this speed is through these monitory mechanisms. The argument here is that the monitory tools have enabled citizens to speed up their pace (Keane, 2009). Chou’s argument here convinces me because when pictures and videos of the Syrian and Egyptian governments were tweeted and texted, this demonstrates the speed of these monitory mechanisms allowing the international community to scrutinize these governments and save

lives. Without these monitory mechanisms, the public would be lost in a sea of information.

Despite this argument, Chou (2018) contends that the speed of the tools that enable us to see news, that otherwise would be hidden, are not politically neutral. The main argument here is that democracy works best in slow motion, when things are sped up, they are less visible or will be lost. I agree that even though we have access to a lot of information, images and videos it doesn't mean that we can process it in less time; deliberation and processing of the information is still required. In Chou's view, "The more complex the situation, the more we need time to deliberate." (Chou, 2018, p. 91). The essence of Chou's argument is that the speed of the monitory mechanisms may have enabled us to see more information more quickly, but it could become a blur or in other words a "veil of ambiguity" in itself.

To summarize, digital media we use today contain very short-lived news reports on events and give us ample time to process all the information that is available to us. In my experience the speed at which the information is being shared allow us to disassociate ourselves from the world around us. The danger of this is that we overlook what democracy really is. Just because there is more for us to see, does not mean we have seen everything. This is exactly what Chou (2018) insisted when referring to Tocqueville's discovery, that speed blinds the people from the fundamentals of democracy. Visual politics of democracy should be approached with the critical thought that transparency only makes some of the things visible. Just because something is transparent does not mean nothing is hidden. When all appears to be clear and visible for us, this is when we should slow down and deliberate on what is actually happening.

The aspect of visual is very important, and as mentioned we should be able to deliberate on political topics rather than seeing the fast-unprocessed reports flash by. How should we process events alternatively? Ultimately, then, my goal is to demonstrate that we should consider documentaries as a useful source of visuals to help us reflect and understand global events and topics. Documentaries are not short-lived media stories; time and effort has been put into the production of the documentary. In other words, they are not forgotten as rapidly as a Tweet or Facebook post. Not all documentaries are slow-paced visual media, but the Congo Tribunal is an example of one that give us the time to process the information; either to change our already existing beliefs or to form new ones. Essentially, I am not arguing that we should give up on digital media as a source of information altogether but that we should consider documentaries as a source to help us understand and reflect on complex political topics on a deeper level. My point is not that we should seek truth-telling, for truth is tampered with even within a democracy but that documentaries initiate reflection and

conversation on various topics. In return, we should be more knowledgeable and be able to form global perspectives.

Hannah Arendt (2008) assumes that there is a tension between truth and politics, and that truth has a “despotic character” (Arendt, 2008, p. 303). Arendt’s point is that those in power fear truth as there is no possibility for them to fully monopolize it. Her claim here is that we seek to manipulate truth to our advantage and the truth that our societies make use of systematic lying which in return is a danger for ‘factual truth’. The lies are used to affect change, to achieve some ends to gather power. Power is the tool that brings people together to work for the same aim. Those who are acting together need to support the aim and legitimize what they are supporting. Without the legitimacy there will be no power, according to Arendt.

Arendt (2008) distinguishes the difference between factual truth and rational truth, where factual truth is based on events where the evidence can be a testimony such as an eye-witness, records or documents. These types of evidence provide the information that what happened, really did happen. Disrupting or accusing the evidence of forgery is questioning the memories of survivors or witnesses thus challenging the factual truth of an event. Lastly, Arendt defines opinion; these are formed through a process where one considers an issue from a particular perspective, collecting information to form the basis of the opinion (Arendt, 2008). Hence this relates back to the concept of deliberative democracy, where information must be collected in order to form a stance and contribute to debates. Thus, I advocate for documentaries to be used when studying certain events because the purpose of the documentary is to present the evidence for what has happened and use witnesses, images and any factual evidence to portray the factual truth of the event. The documentaries invite the audience to become witnesses through the evidence that is presented and form their own opinion. Consequently, it will be difficult to question the evidence as it is presented through visuals and the viewer has become witnesses themselves of something that has happened.

On the other hand, Arendt (2008) does not deny the fact that the alternative to disregard factual truth is by blurring this distinction between factual truth and the falsehood by claiming that a factual truth is an ‘opinion’. This is where the tension between politics and truth arise, where she has acknowledged that our politicians lie and systematic lying occurs. On the contrary, events are a fact, they can not be removed, but the interpretations of the event can be based on someone’s own subjective experience of the event. It is not possible to make up an event or reject the truth as this would devastate the “ground on which we stand and the sky that stretches above us” (Arendt, 1967, p. 313). In other words, the factual truth

of events cannot be changed, thus documentaries are a tool that can be used to share the different opinions on the factual truth.

2.11 Documentaries

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the definition of a documentary is “A film or television radio program that provides factual report on a particular subject” (Oxford University Press, n.d.). In Nichol’s (2010) view a documentary can be defined as

“Documentary film speaks about situations and events involving real people (social actors) who present themselves to us as themselves in stories that convey a plausible proposal about, or perspective on, the lives, situations and events portrayed. The distinct point of view of the filmmaker shapes this story into a way of seeing the historical world directly rather than into a fictional allegory. (Nichols, 2010, p. 14).

In other words, Nichols and the Oxford dictionary both agree that documentaries are based on real events and real people. Nichols definition includes the filmmaker by remarking that the filmmaker decides what should be seen of the historical world, but this not being fictional. Nichols admits there is a thin line between fiction and non-fiction and some techniques associated with fiction are sometimes used in documentary-making, such as scripting, staging or reenactment. However, Nichols emphasizes that documentary-making heavily relies on the impression of authenticity. As an illustration he explains it as being movement (may it be clear or vague); when that movement in the frame is of social actors, who are not performing and not playing in a fiction, then it builds on the authenticity of the film. This technique combined with several other techniques such as voice-over commentary, non-actors and tackling global issues, build up on the authenticity and representation of the world (Nichols, 2010, p. xiv).

Although some readers may object and claim that documentaries are actually forms of propaganda, in Orwell’s view “all art is propaganda” (Orwell, Packer, & Gessen, 2008, p. 26). Orwell’s point here is that nothing is ‘pure’, but this does not mean exposure to propaganda should be avoided, as it is inevitable, and you would not know what you think. Although I disagree with Orwell’s statement, I endorse his conclusion that in order to know what you think you need to have been exposed to information. I would answer that some documentaries may be propaganda, but I do not contend that all documentaries should be

dismissed as propaganda and categorized as irrelevant. To take a case in point, the Kony 2012 campaign is an extreme example of a documentary that received a lot of critique after it had gone viral. The video was developed by a Christian NGO 'Invisible children' where the Californian director produced the documentary with a personal narrative and voice-over commentary to bring visibility to the atrocities that Kony had caused and is still causing in Uganda (Taylor, 2014). This was developed to build a mass movement in the US and capture and 'arrest' Kony. According to McLagan and McKee (2012) this film was clearly produced from the activist perspective. Ultimately what is at stake here is that the documentary sets itself as propaganda because of its lack of correct information, oversimplifying the issue, clear instructions how to join the campaign and adding to the idea of the 'white man savior' complexity (Taylor, 2014). Furthermore Robinson (2018) suggests there may be power, interest and politics involved with visual representation of humanitarian crises. In other words, this involves manipulative communication, which can be referred back to the Kony 2012 campaign. On the one hand humanitarian actors seek our support and help to alleviate suffering by showing images of victims, that actually wouldn't be interpreted as problematic. On the other hand, Robinson reminds us that political actors could use images as an attempt to legitimize their policy or justify their military action. In fact, the Kony video demonstrates this by legitimizing Kony as a US military target and credits itself for the deployment of 100 military advisors to arrest Kony, bringing together military intervention. The video clearly offers a militant intervention, using triumphalism (Waldorf, 2012). Therefore, Robinson warns us that visuals make us believe in our governments but in reality, their actions may be more harmful. Though I concede that the Kony 2012 campaign was indeed a very propagandist documentary, I still maintain that not all documentaries can be put in the same category.

As McLagan and McKee (2012) assert, the creation of a documentary comes from an experience of something and a belief that it is worth knowing about, which does not have to be associated with propaganda. Furthermore, they emphasize that the documentary seeks to engage with the audience and address its public actors. Various documentaries released in the 2000s have stirred political debate, for instance Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Supersize Me* and *An Inconvenient Truth*. The changes that had occurred after these films were released were found to be tools of entertainment but also as a political tool to stir the system. McLagan and McKee's argument is supported by the fact that six weeks after *Supersize Me* was released, McDonalds had decreased their supersize portions. When *An Inconvenient Truth* was released, the debate on climate change and environmental activism were setting the

press agendas and included in the political debate. These examples support the claim by Brown and Rafter (2013) that documentaries are used to disorient their audience and shift them towards witnessing rather than just mere spectatorship. As a result, I agree with Gregg (1999) who advocates that movies and film can enhance the knowledge of political science students. Gregg himself writes “Films can engage our attention by dramatizing and personalizing ideas and events, build bridges to increasingly remote but still important times, and serve as catalysts for debate and further inquiry.” (Gregg, 1999, p. 129). The essence of Gregg’s argument is that film should be used as a source to reflect on the topics to bring in debate. This is what I argue as I contend that film will indeed bring out debates and will allow for us to deliberate and reflect on the issue.

3 Analysis

In this analysis I will reflect upon how documentaries can be a powerful visual tool to encourage deliberation and raise awareness around global conflicts, using the Congo Tribunal Documentary as the case. Furthermore, sections of my analysis will evaluate and analyze the methods used in the Congo Tribunal in contrast to the Kony 2012 documentary. This illustrates how a fast-paced campaign aimed at mass exposure and engagement – the Kony Campaign - differs from the slow-paced, factual-oriented documentary – The Congo Tribunal.

Firstly, a contextual background of both the Congo Tribunal and Kony 2012 campaign will be presented in *Background*. Then five aspects of the Congo Tribunal documentary will be examined in comparison to Kony 2012. These include *fake and true*, *witnesses*, *western perspective*, *empathy* and *the ending*. In *fake and true* I reflect on how the visuals blur the line between what is fake and true in the documentary, before discussing the role of the witnesses; how and when they are used throughout the Congo Tribunal, in section *Witnesses*. Furthermore, after the discussion of factual truth, I discuss how the "white man savior" complex affects both documentaries in *Western Perspectives*. This will lead to the section of *empathy* where I compare how the two documentaries use different techniques to elicit empathy in their viewers. Lastly, the *ending* reflects how the ending of the Congo Tribunal leaves its viewers reflecting on the factual truth.

These five sections conclude that by giving the viewer different perspectives, they are offered a broader context which in turn strives towards deliberative democracy. A comparison will be made of the fast-paced call for action Kony 2012 documentary to the slow-paced reflective documentary the Congo Tribunal. To summarize, this in turn will demonstrate how slow-paced documentaries can be a powerful visual tool to raise awareness on global issues to inform global citizens.

3.1 Background

The documentary 'The Congo Tribunal' (Birkenstock, Zobrist & Rau, 2017) is a documentary by Milo Rau, a Swiss documentary maker. The documentary examines three atrocities that have occurred in the Congo and through these, Rau demonstrates that the conflicts in Congo are no longer exclusively relevant for local concern but for the international community as well. This is because he claims that the conflicts are a result of a large economic war where the interests of international corporations and governments lie in raw material for technology, rather than the humanitarian crises that occur as a result of the

mining of these materials (The Project, n.d.). Two of the three issues are about two mining sites of cassiterite and coltan (two metals used to produce smartphones and laptops), where large multi-national corporations and Congolese corporations are conflicting with local miners. The local miners claim that the large corporations have taken their sites, their work and left them with bad living conditions. The third atrocity is about the Mutarule massacre in 2014 where an estimate of 35 people were murdered. According to Rau and news reports, it is still not clear who is responsible for the attack and why it happened, therefore the families of victims ask for justice, as this is third massacre where the cause is unknown (The Project, n.d.). The portrayal of these three events in this documentary is combined through a set-up of a tribunal that is held both in Congo and in Berlin. The hearings in the Congo include testimonies from government and local representatives, victims, rebels, army representatives and Congolese people whilst in Berlin there are testimonies from experts and representatives of the EU. Rau advocates that this tribunal is used to ‘unveil’ this large economic war that has caused human suffering by allowing everyone to share their side of the story (Director's Statement Milo Rau, n.d.).

The Kony 2012 was a short documentary that went viral in 2012 via social media. The documentary is about the documentary maker, Jason Russell, who had visited Uganda and met a young boy Jacob who was a child soldier. Jacob shared the devastating situation in Uganda with regards to child soldiers and the Lord’s Resistance Army’s leader Joseph Kony. Jason used this documentary to tell the world about child soldiers and who Joseph Kony is. As such, he took a very personal perspective by saying he did not want his son growing up in a world where inhumane and horrendous acts happen. The documentary was also an instruction video on how to join in on the movement against Kony (Taylor, 2004).

3.2 Fake & true

Initially this documentary raises confusion, in the sense that there is no clear line between what is fake and true. On the one hand, as a viewer, it is clear that the documentary is based on a fake tribunal because of the clapper in the beginning that signalizes the filming has begun, just as filming of movie scenes. On the other hand, it is based on real events with real actors who are involved in these issues. Throughout the documentary discussions during the hearings, the scenes of personal one-on-one interviews between the investigator-in-charge and victims, the visits to the mining sites by one of the jury members and personal testimonies of the actors in their own villages portray the ‘real’ of the atrocities that are discussed. Nevertheless, the director brings attention to the fact that there is no international

court in Congo, which would reinforce the idea that this tribunal is fake. As a result, this plays with the viewer's perspective; whether everything that is stated is not set-up beforehand. For instance, a large sign with the words "Truth and Justice" is hung up behind the audience in the tribunal. Each time the camera turns towards the audience, these words are in the frame for five seconds. This sign could have a double meaning just like the blurring line between true and fake. On the one hand, the words represent what is sought; factual truth, seeing past the 'veil of ambiguity' and know what is actually going on in Congo. On the other hand, these words remind the viewers of this documentary, that this tribunal should be interpreted as 'real' and that the viewers are real witnesses. This interpretation would encourage the viewer to critically engage and stay alert throughout the hearings.

3.3 Witnesses

Although the tribunal is a fake set-up, the arrangement of witnesses is done in a manner that gives them power to elicit empathy and truthfulness in their testimonies. All the social actors are personally involved in the atrocities but differ from one another. As mentioned earlier, the witnesses vary from government officials to individual miners, childless mothers or rebel group representatives. As an example of this, before every witness is permitted to share their evidence in the tribunal, they are required to take an oath. This is shown each time a new witness is brought to the stand. Moreover, every time the witnesses give their statement, the documentary switches over to a clip of either the witness themselves or other witnesses in their village sharing the context of their statement. As an illustration, lawyer Sylvestre Bisimwa, who is the investigator-in-charge during the tribunal, interviews a woman who survived the attacks of the massacre. Whilst telling her story, the woman shows her stab wounds and a picture of the child she lost due to the stab injuries. This clip was connected to the testimony given by Amini Kabaka Shemu, student and activist for the Mutarule massacre where he contends the government did not do anything to prevent it from happening.

However, not all testimonies are presented the same. For example, the testimony of a rebel group representative did not have this 'clip' to give background information. Instead this witness only presented their statement admitting to their crimes of rape. Additionally, the witness was completely disguised using a cloak, head cover and voice alteration. It may be argued that the disguise hides whether this witness is really a rebel group member or not. Although I agree with this to a certain point, I insist that the representation of this witness portrays the need for diverse perspectives to deliberate on the factual truth and solutions for the future. Even though the set-up of the tribunal is fake, the fact that different witnesses are

presented, anonymous or identified, contributes to the concept of global citizenship (Schattle, 2007). The admittance to their crimes of rape adds to the dimension of truth. The different perspectives enable for better understanding and engage in critical thought to tackle social injustice and participate in political debates as the witnesses are used to disorient the audience and shift them towards witnesses rather than just spectators (Brown and Rafter, 2013). This presentation of different perspectives acknowledges the complexity of being able to give a different perspective during debates. This is a different approach to representing atrocities in documentaries. Instead of using shocking, fast and emotion evoking visuals and sound, it does quite the opposite. In contrast to the Kony 2012 documentary this documentary is slow-paced, calm and invites the audience to reflect as it is being watched. I will elaborate on this further on.

3.4 Western perspective

When it comes to the topic of documentaries, one controversial issue has been that documentary makers risk falling under the ‘white man savior’ complex. This complex involves the idea that western society is the only one capable of saving the lives of those in need. Despite the fact that the west would be able to contribute to helping victims and those in need, it could however, cause more complications. For instance, the Kony 2012 documentary is very much focused on calling the west to help the children in Uganda and gives the illusion that the west is the only option to save these children. However, in this case it lacks a variety of testimonies from different local witnesses who are involved in Uganda on the ground. The consequences of the west intervening are also not discussed or mentioned, therefore the viewer is not informed of the international and regional issues that arise from these conflicts. Granted, the Congo tribunal does not explicitly portray the consequences of western intervention, but it provides the contextual information of the situation on the ground. Nevertheless, the lack of contextual information can be problematic as it contributes to the idea that the west are the only saviors for those in need. Thus, it is important to realize as the viewer what decisions are made by the documentary maker such as the order of scenes, which scenes to add, music, sound and whether they should be physically involved or be interpreted as invisible from the viewer. As an illustration the contrast between the Kony 2012 director Jason Russell and the Congo Tribunal director Milo Rau will be examined.

Quite often documentary makers use themselves as a point of entry for the audience to be ‘hooked’ on the topic. This is one way to gain the attention of the west and answer the question ‘why should we care?’. In the Kony 2012 documentary Jason Russell uses his

personal story and son to gain the empathy of the western viewer to care about the children in Uganda. Whereas, the Congo tribunal does not present Milo Rau with his personal story. Instead, the first twenty minutes of the documentary follows Milo Rau setting up the tribunal and traveling in the Congo to speak to various witnesses. After twenty minutes, Rau talks about the purpose of the tribunal during a radio interview in the Congo. This is when Rau personally explains the purpose of the documentary. Admittedly using a personal touch or story may draw the interest of the viewer. However, the fact that Rau does not use his personal story presents the fact that his presence or his opinion on the topic is not the focus of the documentary.

Besides using themselves as a point of entry, the director has the power to determine what is shown and shared with the audience; which visuals, how and when they are portrayed in the duration of the documentary. Besides these decisions, the physical presence of the documentary maker can influence the viewer. In the case of the Congo Tribunal, Rau minimizes his physical presence from the start to end of the tribunal. The impression of the viewer is that he does not interfere with what is being said by leaving out his questioning and only filming what is said by the witnesses and experts. As a result, Rau is aware of himself and the power of his physical presence, but this does not mean he is not present throughout the documentary. It could be argued that the lack of presence of Rau could be a tool of manipulation and it is a necessary manipulation for the viewer to focus on the issue at hand rather than focusing on him throughout the whole documentary.

In addition, the Congo Tribunal does not put the west or western perspective in the spotlight just as the documentary maker. The Berlin hearings are a stage for the western perspectives to share their point of view on the issues, but they do not discredit any of what is being said by the Congolese. When the experts in Berlin give their comments, you do not see anyone take an oath. This challenges the idea of western perspectives always being the main focus of debates, conversely the western perspective is put on a lower pedestal which gives room for other viewpoints. Nevertheless, the western perspective is not discredited completely, it is just not the focus of attention here, as it usually can be with other documentaries. In fact, this can also be related to the scenes where visuals of the Congolese landscape are used between the hearings to keep the viewer 'in' the Congo. This full focus on the Congo doesn't allow the viewer to go 'back' to western society until the documentary is finished. I assert that this is a good emphasis on what the focus of the documentary is, not necessarily to make the audience feel uncomfortable.

In addition to this, quite often celebrities are used as ambassadors or voices to bring

attention to issues. In this case, this technique is not utilized in this documentary as it would shift the focus and risk losing the power of the opinions of the other witnesses. In other words, it would be seem disrespectful to use a celebrity because what do they know about these issues better than those involved?

3.5 Empathy

Documentaries have been able to change the policies and shift attitudes towards a topic, as suggested with *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Supersize me*. However, when depicting topics such as war or humanitarian crises quite often the images used are shocking or include children or mothers suffering, because they are perceived as innocent people who need protection (Robinson, 2018). Although these images are used by political actors for political purposes or organizations to gain empathy for those in need, the shocking images can also be too shocking where the viewer turns away. For instance, *Kony 2012* used fast flashing images of mutilated faces of children, these images were supposed to portray what Kony had done to children. However, the fast-flashing of various pictures of mutilated faces dehumanizes these children and overwhelms the viewer (Moeller, 2018). By using this technique, the documentary actually dehumanizes Kony as a monster as well. As the focus is to shock and elicit empathy, it lacks in presenting the consequences of this conflict for the international and domestic community. Thus increasing the distance between viewer and victim. On the contrary, the Congo Tribunal rarely uses any shocking images and if so, does not do it in a dramatically shocking manner. The only scene where shocking images were used, was in the beginning when Rau and his crew witnessed the bodies three days after the massacre. The scene first shows Rau and his crew walking towards the bodies laid on the ground and zooming in on an infant who was murdered. After this, the loved ones specifically the mothers and wives surrounded the bodies and expressed their pain and loss at that moment. Many women expressed emptiness because all their children were murdered. Ultimately, these scenes are used to persuade the viewer and elicit empathy, as Robinson (2018) asserted where close-up images of women and children are used to persuade the viewer because they are innocent and are in need of protection. Despite using this common technique, it is only used in the beginning and after seventy-five minutes of the hundred minute long documentary which I suggest is necessary to avoid neglecting the factual truth of the casualties. For instance, the last scene presented the crew members being led into the hospital room where traces of blood on the floor and clothing are found. In other words these were the traces of a woman who was murdered while giving birth. Whereas, throughout *Kony 2012* voice-over

commentary explaining the atrocities accompanied by fast flashing images of mutilated faces was used. These images are shocking in themselves, but the rapid swapping allows for distancing to occur between viewer and victim (Moeller, 2018). The viewer may not want to 'see' the images and turn away. Despite the fast flashing of horrific images, Kony 2012 did elicit empathy to action, as many people have followed the movement. As for the Congo Tribunal it does elicit empathy but not immediate action. It provides the context of the international and national consequences of these conflicts which in turn informs citizens of global challenges.

3.6 The ending of the documentary

Having just argued that the director decides all aspects that are shown of the documentary, I want now to complicate the point by looking at the ending of the documentary. The ending is important because it leaves the viewer thinking about what was presented to them. Consider the ending of the Congo Tribunal, for example. After the tribunal was closed the scene changed back to where the massacre occurred and two unknown people from RRMP (Reponse Rapide aux Mouvements de Population) are taking pictures of themselves smiling next to the graves of the victims. This image elicits discomfort in the viewer as the graves represent the painful and inhumane act that was discussed throughout the documentary. After this the scene fades out to a black screen where concluding verdicts are shown. The text starts with the fact that the tribunal in Congo ended with a judgement against the Congolese government and the multinational raw material conglomerates. Furthermore, the tribunal 'freed' the UN from any blame for direct complicity with the massacre. Subsequently, the ministers of interior and minister of mining for the province of South Kivu were dismissed off their duties. The last text from the Congo tribunal was that Sylvestre Bisimwa is involved in establishing a permanent court modelled on the Congo Tribunal. Besides, the Berlin tribunal ended in June 2015, which had a second verdict that held the World Bank and EU responsible for the crimes in Eastern Congo. After this last verdict the screen is black and the documentary ended. These verdicts encourage the viewer to think what evidence was presented in order to get to these verdicts. These texts are connected to the notion of true or fake as verdicts have been decided as if it were a real tribunal. This encourages the viewer to be critical of each social actor. In sum, then, the ending of the documentary is presented in such a way that the tribunal is considered a true concept that has led to the verdict, adding to the factual truth.

3.7 Deliberative democracy

By presenting the different perspectives, the viewer is offered a background context of the conflicts, instead of exclusive opinions of elite and politicians. The testimonies of various social actors are offered that may have not been considered had it only been the perspectives of the elite and politicians. This approach reflects the deliberative manner that can occur in a global civil society on topics of international politics. Documentaries can use witnesses and personal stories to elicit empathy in the viewer. While it may be true that the Congo Tribunal does not elicit empathy to action as Kony 2012 did, it does not necessarily follow that the techniques used in Kony 2012 is the most relevant for well-deliberated solutions. Admittedly, the Kony 2012 documentary has been able to get its viewers to take action and join the cause which was done through a rushed and fast use of shocking visuals. The possible danger driven by a fast-paced Youtube video could lead to public pressure and rash need for action in ignorance (Gurney, 2012). Furthermore, this fast-paced information does not provide background context but a biased opinion of the audience with regards to Kony. On the contrary the Congo Tribunal takes its time, using slow-paced visuals, no voice over-commentary and one-on-one interviews with the witnesses. On the one hand, I agree that the fast-paced documentary may be more affective in getting its viewers to empathize and act immediately. But on the other hand, I still insist that through the slow-paced visuals and more in-depth information, the viewer will be able to form their own opinion on the topic and gain a global perspective, rather than being influenced into thinking the same as others.

To take another case in point, that may be less clear at first, is when the United Nations representative explains in an interview that he was denied permission to attend the Congo Tribunal as a jury by the United Nations headquarters in New York. He explains this may be in fear of being criticized during the tribunal. Nevertheless, throughout the whole documentary his chair and table were visibly empty, adding to this constant reminder that politics was in play despite this tribunal being 'fake'. This contributes to the fact that the tribunal is considered something impactful enough that the UN has denied their representation there. Besides this, the fact that his chair is empty on screen engages the viewer to think beyond what is visible. This adding to the deliberative democracy idea of seeing beyond what is visible and consider what is invisible. These representations may go unnoticed in fast-paced documentaries.

While it is true that a slow documentary may lose the interest of the viewer because of dense information and slow-speed, it does not necessarily follow that this slow-paced documentary is too dense. After all the documentary uses various and diverse scenes to

represent the different social actors involved in the atrocities and uses the Berlin hearings for expert opinion on these atrocities. Throughout the tribunal the documentary brings the viewer to different places in the Congo to witness the social actors, thus not merely 'telling' the information to the viewer. Therefore, it utilizes the transnational attribute of a tribunal in Congo and Berlin to present the information through a diverse manner that does not overwhelm the viewer. As a result, to be globally aware of international politics and the complexity of the issues, it is necessary to be able to deliberate on new information. This should be done in a timely manner (Coleman & Blumler, 2009).

4 Conclusion

In this section, I will conclude that global visual culture has been a powerful tool within the study of International Relations and helps inform the global citizens. Furthermore, this thesis illustrates why documentaries can be a beneficial medium to convey factual truth on complex issues, and complements the fast-paced digital media by enabling the viewer to process the information differently. In my analysis, I reflected upon how this was the case for the Congo Tribunal documentary by highlighting the differences in how truth was conveyed, how empathy was used as a tool, how various witnesses were used, how the directors influenced their power, how the ending was presented and how the speed reflected the deliberative democracy. Ultimately, this led to the conclusion that documentaries, such as the Congo Tribunal, potentially benefit the global citizen to gain a better understanding of global conflicts despite its lower potential reach than fast paced digital media campaigns that go viral, specifically Kony 2012. Nevertheless, this documentary encouraged me to realize how the western digital media have not given any attention to the amount of deaths and conflicts in the Congo. It's shocking to realize the little media attention it had received as there are many visual tools that can be used to share atrocities to other sides of the world.

Lastly, it is important to stress that the manner in which the Congo Tribunal Documentary was filmed led to several results. Consider the fact that the two ministers; the minister of interior and mining were dismissed after the release of this documentary, for example. Furthermore, this documentary has led to the encouragement of transnational activism involving the set-up of a permanent court in Congo, molded on this tribunal.

This thesis has examined the potential of art, and more specifically, documentaries, as an alternative contribution to the understanding of international politics. Based on the Congo Tribunal Documentary, I argued why such documentaries could facilitate increased understanding of issues that are not bound by borders such as war, famine and poverty. These

are often simplified and/or overlooked by fast-paced digital media. Consequently, I argue that documentaries are increasingly becoming an important medium as a result of our increasingly frequent interactions with fast paced digital media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Kaempf, 2018). It is necessary that global citizens are given the opportunity to dwell on the conflicts more meaningfully and encourage to think critically in international political debates. Ultimately, the fast speed of digital media today does not provide the global civil society the time and contextual information to reflect upon the fast-moving politics. This blindness increases the belief that there is more transparency in the global civil society. Hence, arts such as documentaries is a potential format to see past the 'veil of ambiguity' by providing various perspectives that otherwise would not be considered.

Nevertheless, this thesis does not dismiss 'call for action' documentaries as they are useful fast paced documentaries that can reach hundreds of millions of people, just as *Kony 2012*. However, the Congo Tribunal has demonstrated that the use of fast-paced and shocking images is not always fundamental to be moved. Although I grant that just because you have seen a form of visual it does not always mean you are moved, I still maintain that the visual dimension of slow-paced documentaries help with a better understanding of what is happening on the other side of the world. This reflects McLagan and McKee's (2012) argument that the creation of a documentary comes from the belief that this topic is worth knowing about. It is clear in the documentary that the conflicts are not easy to solve, but it is necessary to give balanced information. My point is not to dismiss all digital media, but to encourage global citizens to combine the fast-paced digital media with documentaries to allow global citizens to get a deeper understanding of issues. In other words, visual arts can help in debates of international politics.

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