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Nongovernmental Organizations and the Global Governance Institutional Gap

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Abstract

Global governance refers to global cooperation through existing and developing structures, groups, and initiatives, yet little academic research focuses on the role of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) in promoting global governance. Using Benet's polarities of democracy (POD) as the theoretical foundation, the purpose of this qualitative, critical case study was to explore why and how INGOs address the gap in global governance institutions in terms of humanitarian support. Data collection involved open-ended interviews with 12 members of an international, nonprofit service organization providing humanitarian support services to a global community. Interview data were inductively coded and subjected to a thematic analysis procedure. Findings revealed four key themes: INGOs fill the global governance institutional gap because members think it is the right thing to do and they want to help their fellow human beings; effective global governance starts locally and simply, global governance remains conceptual, and POD shows promise as a possible global governance policy guide. Findings may be used to promote INGO participation in the provision of global humanitarian support and to improve global cooperation in addressing problems, such as pandemics, mass migration, and climate change. Initial analysis of alignment between POD, U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, and U.N. Sustainable Developmental Goals points to a priority in the human rights and communal obligations as well as freedom and authority pairs. All of humanity, particularly those in poverty and distress, stands to benefit from effective global governance, and theoretical tools such as POD may guide our efforts as social practitioners for positive change.

Keywords: *global governance; nongovernmental organizations; sustainable development goals; polarities of democracy*

Introduction

Global governance has emerged as a key political, economic, and social phenomenon in the past 2 decades, but scholars and practitioners remain unclear as to how to describe it and capture what it entails. The phenomenon involves connections to older areas of social science and continues to emerge as a developing framework with over 2 decades of scholarly investigation (Hofferberth, 2015). The new conceptual aspect of

global governance refers to the varied definitions given to the term and the continued development of themes associated with it. The old linkages tie back to international relations, political science, and other related fields of study where investigations of how humans governed themselves have always been of scholarly interest and where scholars advocated further cross-disciplinary study (Pegram & Acuto, 2015). Scholars recently stressed knowledge gaps in the literature regarding how global governance is developing and whether it is becoming more influential with respect to solving some of humanity's most difficult challenges (Sinclair, 2013; Weiss, 2013). A review of current literature indicated the need for further exploration because global governance is becoming more influential in areas such as technology sharing, environmental controls (global warming), trade (financial networks), human rights (international nongovernmental organization [INGO] expansion), and issues such as mass migration and global health concerns (pandemics).

Global Governance and the Literature

The simplistic definition of global governance is of governance at the global level without formal government. This is a general description used to satisfy the rapidly developing concept of global governance sometimes considered a floating signifier because it is used to cover such a large and diverse area of policy studies. I favor a more precise definition, such as the one provided by Willetts (2011), stating, "global governance consists of policymaking and policy implementation in global political systems, through the collaboration of governments with actors from civil society and the private sector" (p. 148). This description is more inclusive and includes civil society and the private sector as separate entities with direct impact in global power transactions. The influence of private-sector multinational corporations and globalization is studied extensively through the discipline of economics, yet civil society and the increased influence of INGOs on global governance remains more conceptual. How and why these civil society agents are acting to fill institutional gaps in global governance is gaining in importance as the numbers of INGOs continue to increase. This knowledge gap has been addressed from a structural perspective in some areas such as global information society norms (Dany, 2013), yet more is needed.

Although global governance institutions and practices have been in place for some time (consider the formation of the United Nations), the actual term of global governance has not been with us for more than 20 years or so and remains a rapidly developing area of study within many scholarly disciplines, to include public administration, political science, international relations, and economics. The imperative of global challenges, or wicked problems, has made the need for some form of global governance more pressing (Goldin, 2013; Sinclair, 2013; Weiss, 2013) despite recent trends toward populism and the rebuilding of national borders. Global governance is not the solution to all these challenges (Rodrick, 2011; Grygiel, 2016), yet global cooperation, and the growing influence of non-state actors, such as INGOs are expected to continue to address institutional gaps in the need for global goods and services (Willetts, 2011). Global governance theory is lacking except in possible adaptations of polycentric (Ostrom, 1965), regime (Ruggie, 2014), or bottom-up theories (Samli, 2009); however, theoretical frameworks such as polarity management (PM; Johnson, 2014) and polarities of democracy (POD; Benett, 2006, 2012, 2013) present a possible lens through which to view this developing idea of global governance. To better understand this developing concept, the critical case of the INGO, Rotary, and more specifically, the international project experts found within my own Rotary district in England, was interviewed and data were explored through a qualitative study. First, a quick review of PM and POD is necessary to better explain the theoretical lens for this study.

Polarities of Democracy and the Development of Polarity Pairings

The general globalization theory and bottom-up and polycentric concepts helped me characterize and explain how INGOs fit within global governance; however, the primary theory I based my study on is the POD developed by Benet (2006, 2012, 2013). POD addresses the challenges of democratic governance through the understanding of how to achieve positive democratic outcomes via a careful management of conditions along five opposed polarity pairs: freedom and authority, justice and due process, diversity and equality,

participation and representation, and human rights and communal obligations (Benet, 2006, 2012, 2013). I used this theoretical framework to analyze the data collected through interviews of key informants. I begin the review by discussing the origins of POD: PM (Benet, 2006, 2012, 2013; Johnson, 2014).

Managerial Grid and Polarity Management: The Basis for POD

Benet (2006, 2012, 2013) credited the concepts of the managerial grid (Blake & Mouton, 1964) and polarity management (PM) developed in the 1970s by Johnson (2014) as the basis for POD. Before Johnson's PM, Blake and Mouton (1964) advocated a method of management based on a grid system that helped focus management of complex work environments on a positive outcome. Benet (2006, 2012, 2013) connected this with the PM developed by Johnson to build the concept that eventually evolved into POD.

Just as Blake and Mouton dealt with complex managerial situations with their grid model, Johnson claimed many of the most complex challenges exist in a polar relationship between two competing poles. These poles might represent values such as team versus individual (as a management challenge), or in the case of global governance, this type of relationship could exist between nation-states and transnational organizations (Sinclair, 2013; Weiss, 2013). The PM theory is flexible as to what two opposing poles are chosen; however, the framework is rigid with respect to the use of a polarity map representing both positive and negative outcomes of both poles in four quadrants (Johnson, 2014). PM does represent a mutually exclusive system where it is ideal to keep as many of the outcomes in the two positive quadrants of the polar pairing and out of the negative quadrants, although the more we push toward one extreme of either of the positive poles, the more likely we are to fall back into one of the negative quadrants. This theory helps me to understand why we may be experiencing swings between positive global governance outcomes and reactionary forces, such as containment policies and isolationism. PM theory holds that leveraging between the positive and negative outcomes of both poles will result in the best outcome for managing, not solving, a complex problem. Some problems are not meant to be solved, but management is possible to achieve as much of a positive relationship as is feasible.

Benet derived the POD polarity pairings based on the PM concept of leveraging between negative and positive poles with respect to critical pairings in workplace democracy and democracy in general (Benet, 2006, 2012, 2013). Benet (2006) based his pairings on 10 key civic values highlighted by Butts (1980) in his work on the revival of civic learning (the Butts work was out of circulation and reprinted in 2016 by Benet, with permission). Out of the five pairings developed by Benet (see Figure 1), the pairing of human rights and communal obligations fits well with the case of INGOs working to address humanitarian needs on a global scale, and in turn, contributing to the changing phenomenon of global governance (Sinclair, 2013; Weiss, 2013; Willets, 2011). How this pairing (and possibly a blending with the other pairings) is influenced by the actions of INGOs is what I explored through the case of Rotary projects in my Rotary district and the interviews of key Rotarians involved in managing a subset of these international humanitarian projects.

I followed in the path of other recent scholars to have used the POD theoretical framework in their own work, such as Ezeocha (2016), who investigated social change in the Niger Delta; George (2016), who reflected on enforcement of alcohol regulations through collaborative leadership in South Carolina; and more recently, Griffith (2017), who studied the social dilemma of chronic homelessness. These topics range significantly from geographic region to type of social challenge, yet the POD framework was applied to all three studies to address what Benet (2006, 2012, 2013) highlighted as the three greatest challenges to human survival: environmental destruction, conflict and violence, and economic deprivation. The wicked problems (see Brown et al., 2010) I addressed already in the opening of this article match well with these challenges highlighted by Benet and give me confidence the POD framework holds potential for positive social change in global

governance. Therefore, PM (as theoretical concept) and POD (as theoretical framework) provide a viable

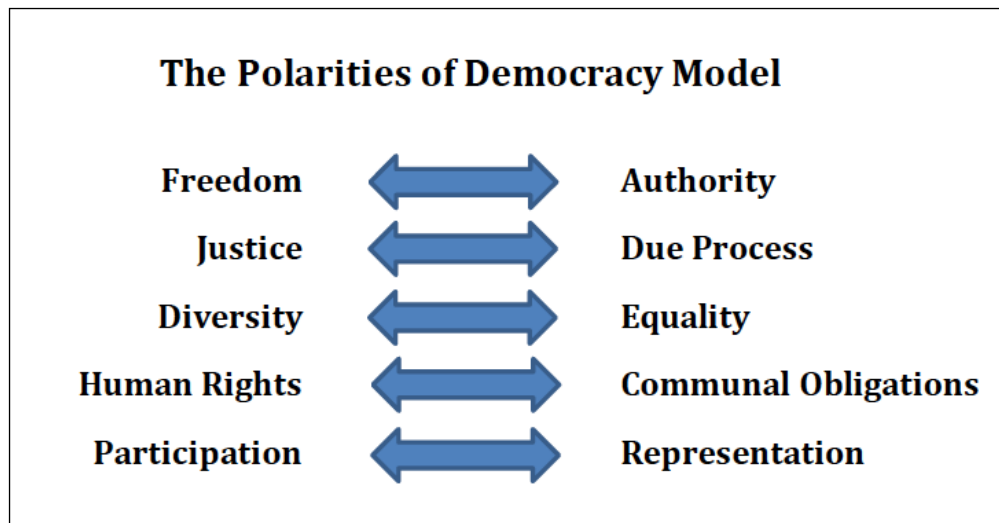theoretical lens for this exploratory research when the literature of PM and POD are closely examined.

Figure 1. *Polarities of Democracy Pairings*

INGOs and Global Governance: The Case of Rotary

To demonstrate the growing contribution of INGOs such as Rotary in the context of global governance, and to explore the potential for a broad theoretical framework such as POD to facilitate better management of INGO efforts at local, regional, and global levels, I conducted a qualitative case study within a single Rotary district located in the South East Midlands of England. Rotary District 1070 (see https://rotary1070.org/) is composed of nearly 90 Rotary clubs, roughly 2,500 Rotarians, and boasts a robust history of involvement in international aid efforts throughout the globe.

Research Plan

My research plan included the important considerations of recruitment, participation, and basic guidelines for how I collected the data from international aid experts within Rotary. Recruitment was not difficult for my research because I interviewed Rotarians in my Rotary district via selective sampling. As mentioned, they all lived within a relatively close geographic area. Rotarians also tend to be incredibly open and giving of their free time. They are often busy and professional people, so I flexed my interviews to meet their availability. Rotarians are also generally keen to support positive social change, because this is the bedrock of the Rotary mission (see http://www.rotary.org and https://www.rotarygbi.org). I identified seven international experts (defined below) to interview, so I only needed to ask if they would participate. If any of these seven did not wish to support my study, I had alternate experts in mind (within the Rotary district) and could expand this pool as needed. This is not a finite group, so I had a degree of flexibility in my recruitment plan. Recruitment proved to be as uneventful as I expected. The response to my research request was so positive, I ended up interviewing 12 Rotarians in total.

The definition of an expert in this study refers to Rotarians with deep and extensive experience in planning, supporting, and in some cases, directing international projects. Rotary (2020) has a category of international project experts called the Cadre of Technical Advisors, which number only in the hundreds throughout the

entirety of Rotary International (RI). In my district, I only knew of five such individuals, and four happened to be on or were previously on the district international committee. A Cadre member must have evaluated or overseen at least five international projects and have proven experience in humanitarian efforts throughout their lifetimes. I consider Cadre members to fit the definition of expert for my study. The other members of the district international service committee, as well as some Rotarians in the district at large, are also highly experienced with international projects, yet they have either not applied to become a member of Cadre, or they have fewer than five projects in their international project experience. These Rotarians, although not Cadre, were also considered to be experts for the purposes of my study based on their many years of work with international projects. Because I have been a Rotarian for over 9 years and have worked closely with the international projects team for 4 years, I did not require a complicated process to identify these experts. All those members of the international committee were considered experts by my study definition, and the Rotarians at large with this type of experience, were easily identified via our committee database of experts and through the district directory (published every year). I provided the interview candidates I identified with a recruitment letter. They were all provided the opportunity to decline or accept participation at that point.

Once I recruited all the international experts for my interview phase of the research plan, I did my best to complete the interviews in a 1-month period. I allowed for longer if needed, as I expected some of my interview candidates to be unavailable at times with family and work commitments. This proved to be the case at times and flexibility was required. In general, I adjusted my own schedule to fit theirs and travelled to their homes or another neutral location where we were both comfortable and undisturbed during the interview. As I collected the interviews, I began the data analysis by putting together a case record for each interview to include a transcript, any related documentation, and initial thoughts from my own perspective as the researcher. As I was an observer–participant in the sense of being a fellow Rotarian who also works with international projects, I included my perceptions and thoughts in the case record.

Results from 12 interviews showed how and why INGOs fill the institutional gap in global governance (see Goldin, 2013; Sinclair, 2013; Weiss, 2013; Zurn, 2018). I used Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) theoretical framework, POD, to examine INGO efforts in the context of the emerging global governance concept and wicked problems (see Brown et al., 2010).

Because global governance is a new concept (roughly 20 years old), the literature indicated a need to guide this emerging phenomenon from the theoretical to the practical for what could be immediate application by INGOs in planning and executing their day-to-day efforts across the globe. Four themes emerged and two major findings were highlighted. First, global governance is currently viewed as a concept by INGO practitioners, and is seen as positive and promising with further refinement. The second finding is the theoretical framework POD is welcome at the INGO practitioner level to guide efforts with respect to complex global challenges, but this framework is also in need of further refinement to be of direct utility in their efforts.

Interpretation of the Findings

The data analysis resulted in four emergent themes. The research question of why INGOs address the global governance institutional gap (Goldin, 2013; Sinclair, 2013; Weiss, 2013; Zurn, 2018) resulted in a simple theme of global activism based on special characteristics of global INGOs like RI such as global reach and expert, diverse members. The research question of how INGOs actively fill the gap was answered in the theme of global governance needing to start locally and simply, which links strongly to bottom-up theories of development. Both these themes confirm and amplify the growing trend of INGOs as increasingly active partners in global governance (see Dany, 2013; Willetts, 2011) and more recent scholarly discourse (see Ruhlman, 2015; Zurn, 2018). The question of how global governance was viewed by the INGO international project was answered in a theme that global governance is still conceptual (not yet an accepted framework) yet

is considered very promising. This confirms the understanding described by Sinclair (2013) and Weiss (2013) and more recently Zurn (2018). Finally, the question of how POD was considered with respect to global governance was answered in the theme of POD as a potential policy guide; however, participants wanted more work to be done to transform POD into a practical global governance policy analysis guide. The most prevalent words spoken in the interviews are shown in Figure 2 with words such as balance, local and model standing out in my analysis.
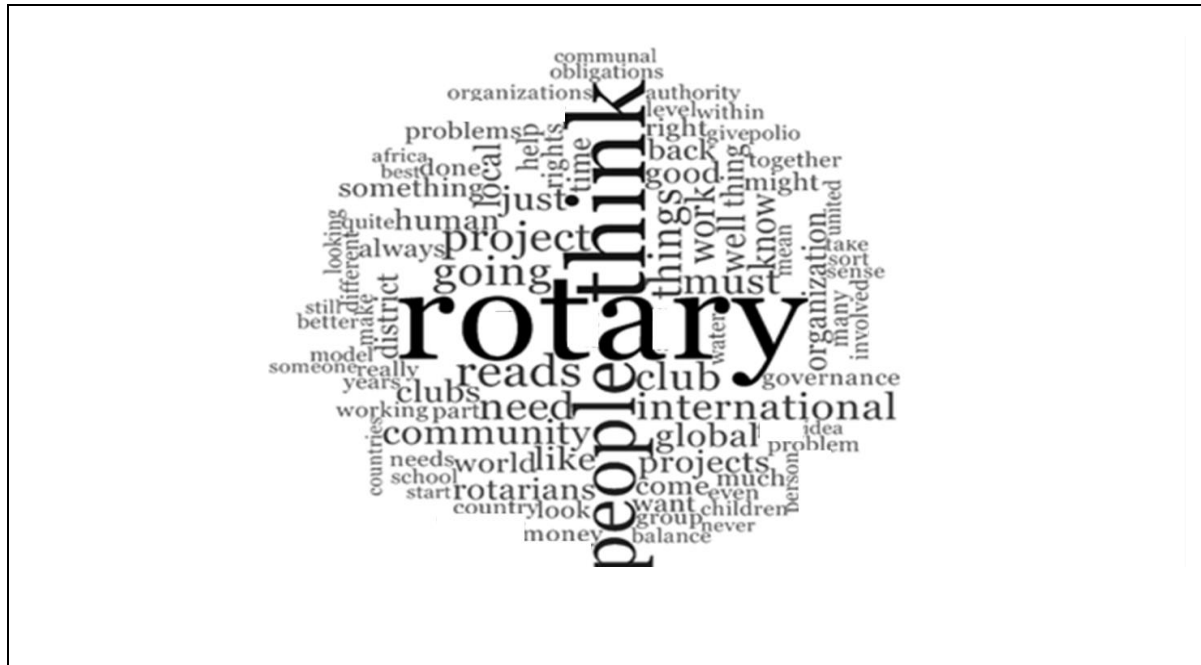

Figure 2. *NVivo Word Cloud Showing the Most Common Interview Words by Frequency*

Why INGOs Fill Global Governance Gaps

All interview respondents indicated INGOs (such as Rotary) fill the global governance institutional gap because they think it is the right thing to do and they want to help their fellow human beings locally as well as internationally. The coded interview responses were refined into the overall them of global activism with key codes falling underneath, such as global enhancement, expert volunteers, and diversity. Rotarians and many INGOs do not have to be asked to "fill the need;" they simply "get on with things and do it." There was not much time wasted in the interviews with reasons why governments fail to live up to the needs of their people and more time was spent on why Rotarians fill the need. The respondents reported that because there is suffering and RI can assist, they felt a moral obligation to do so. It is that simple to those interviewed for this research. This strong theme of global activism matches well with the literature concerning the rapid expansion of INGOs over the past 50 years and continued growth projections (Karns & Mingst, 2010; Willets, 2010) with more interaction at the UN and in global governance overall. This theme describes an enthusiastic outlook and desire to help.

How INGOs Fill Global Governance Gaps

The respondents had slightly different opinions on how RI fills the global governance institutional gap, yet a general theme of effective global governance starting locally and simply emerged. This theme was underpinned by codes such as global reach, bottom-up focus, communication is vital, inspirational leadership,

simplicity is best, sustainability is critical, and Rotary ethics, which were all coded out of the views of a majority of those interviewed. The literature did not have as much detail in this area of investigation, so these results may assist with filling in this procedural aspect of INGO methods used to accomplish their work. The bottom-up theory (see Samli, 2009) appears to be at work in the analyses of the Rotarians interviewed as they stressed the importance of working at the local level first before trying to scale up to a regional or global context. This response was one of the strongest, with 11 respondents having at least one coded item for this bottom-up approach to humanitarian development. Simple, sustainable projects with heavy local participation were the coded response items driving the overall theme of effective global governance starting locally and simply.

Global Governance as a Concept

The literature indicated that global governance remains a concept, and the response from those interviewed supported this conclusion. The theme of global governance remaining conceptual was based on coded responses such as global governance is a concept, global governance avoidance, and global governance is rational. This was the least apparent theme in the coding, and indicated the uncertainty of what global governance means, as the literature would suggest (see Goldin, 2013; Sinclair, 2013; Weiss, 2013; Zurn, 2018). Four respondents felt global governance was a thing to be avoided if Rotary were to accomplish its goals more effectively. On the other hand, five respondents indicated that global governance was rational, and they understood the concept. This mixed response stressed a theme of global governance remaining conceptual. Further, this theme helps confirm that practitioners are still unsure of what global governance will bring to their work in the future, yet they remain somewhat positive that global governance is beneficial overall (over half of those interviewed).

POD as a Theoretical Framework

The most exiting result of the research is the theme of POD being a possible global governance policy guide, or at least showing potential. Benet (2006, 2012, 2013) indicated there are practical applications for this theoretical framework in many governance contexts; therefore, the finding from the current study is not a surprise. In example, Rotary has a well-defined grant approval and evaluation system where a policy analysis tool such as POD could be used in practical planning and application of grants. This theme was founded on the responses for POD as a policy guide, POD balance, and separate responses to the individual POD policy pairs. However, a positive response by the respondents was noted with eight out of 12 supporting POD as a policy guide and 10 responses supporting efforts to achieve a balance in the POD polarity pairs. Three respondents reported that they felt POD was unclear. They did not discount the theory completely; rather, they indicated that they did not understand it well enough. This theme supports the finding of POD showing promise as a potential policy guide and as a tool for INGO international project managers, such as those interviewed, in their social change work at global, regional, and local levels. Most respondents felt the POD model would be most helpful at the global levels of INGO management, and would also be useful for those working locally (particularly the POD balance concept with the pairings).

Discussion

Limitations of the Study

The limitations to this study included my status as a member of RI and my association with those interviewed. This was a concern, yet the direct access to these international project experts and cultural familiarity as a fellow Rotarian had a positive side as well. The proximity allowed for easy access to rich data in this critical case. The relationship between me and those interviewed was professional (fellow Rotarians), but not personal. The open and transparent nature of the RI INGO also mitigated this concern of researcher bias by

presenting the opportunity for another researcher to follow up on this process and conduct the same study without difficulty.

The original plan to collect and analyze documents from the Rotary district international committee and to use an original database of projects created by the committee was not executed. The documents in question were too task specific to provide rich data on a topic as broad and complex as global governance, and the database was not complete enough to provide an accurate data sample. Therefore, triangulation with these other data sources was not possible. Member checking was used to ensure the accuracy of the data collected; however, time restraints prevented me from allowing the interview respondents the opportunity to review the summary findings.

The other limitation was the broad and complex nature of global governance and the applicability of a single case. This limitation proved somewhat accurate in the case of transferability, yet by concentrating on the specific critical case used, I was able to capture rich data to address the broad and complex nature of global governance and provide key themes for further research. Transferring these findings to other INGOs is not possible until similar research is done across a larger sample of INGOs. The possibility of these themes proving to be more general and universal in nature is strong based on the literature reviewed (see Goldin, 2013; Sinclair, 2013; Weiss, 2013; Zurn, 2018), yet further studies are needed to validate this prediction.

Recommendations

The limitations mentioned above do not restrict further explorative research, which is highly recommended to understand if the themes and findings from this research apply to other INGO cases in other places and times. For example, do INGOs based in other than Western countries display the same beliefs and interview response as noted with RI in a Western nation, like England? If so, why is this the case? If not, why is this not the case? At what point can we begin to say the themes are transferable from case-to-case, or even from sample-to-population? The answer to these and other related research questions are only discovered through further research.

The positive response from those interviewed with respect to POD as a policy tool or guidebook is encouraging and points to developing the POD from a theoretical framework to a more practical tool for those INGOs in the field. The request by these international project experts for a POD playbook is a development they would employ right away if given the chance, according to some of the respondents. Further research to try and generalize these findings and further development of POD for more practical application are the key recommendations from this study.

Implications

Social change

The positive social change implications of this research are centered on helping those involved in the global governance community, to include INGOs, find a more proven and viable path toward effective and efficient action in relieving human and animal suffering as well as supporting positive outcomes with respect to global challenges, or the so-called, wicked problems (Brown et al., 2010). The findings of INGO (Rotary, in this case) willingness to support global governance if cooperation is productive (through global activism), and the belief that a theoretical framework such as POD is a potential global governance policy guide, all point to a movement which promises positive social change. Will this optimistic outlook bear fruit, this remains unclear; however, ideas are powerful, and the thrust of the INGO experts interviewed in this research is toward filling requirement gaps in global governance and using theoretical tools, such as POD to guide their efforts along the way.

Conceptual and theoretical

Global governance remains a conceptual framework at this time; however, research such as this study is intended to understand this concept as it slowly takes shape into a new form of governance executed primarily at the global level. Theoretical frameworks exist in close cooperation with global governance; yet understanding their exact relationships and how they might be more practically applied, like POD to assist INGO activists, remains complicated and unclear. The need for more research of a qualitative, explorative nature is apparent, yet there will also be a need for mixed-methods and quantitative research as the more inductive results of the exploratory research require a deductive approach to nail down certain phenomena. Moving POD from a theoretical framework to also have use at the practical level of social change is a top priority in my own future as a scholar and hopefully for many others who will add to the store of knowledge in this emerging area of global governance.

Recommendation for Practice

The global challenges faced by humanity are not decreasing and only show signs of becoming more intractable; therefore, a better understanding of global governance and how we might cooperate more effectively at the global level (not to discount the regional and local levels) is driving the need for research such as this. Exploratory research must quickly evolve into structured, mixed-methods and quantitative research to test the new global governance policy tools, such as POD, and how they are affecting the achievement of better results with respect to managing global challenges. As pandemics take root, fiscal downturns become more contagious across global financial markets, mass-migration flows increase and sea waters continue to rise, the INGO community will be hard pressed to respond quickly enough and with enough impact to fill the growing governance gaps. Global cooperation and cross-disciplinary solutions (Brown et al., 2010) will no longer be options, but will likely become imperative. Finding common ground between INGOs, multinational corporations, international governmental organizations, and nation states is more critical and themes such as those, which emerged from my research should be applied toward finding this common ground.

In the meantime, theoretical frameworks, such as POD, can be applied as soon as possible to practical situations where those providing global goods and services need guidance and proven tools to navigate this increasingly complex world of global governance and cross-border interaction. A POD playbook of sorts and liaisons between the world of theory to the world of the practitioner are needed according to the findings in this research and the literature reviewed, highlighting new terms such as *effective altruism* (Economist, 2018), which attempts to marry scientific rigor to philanthropic efforts. More study is required, and theoretical frameworks translated into practical tools are needed at the level of the practitioner, now, not tomorrow.

Following the research an initial comparison for alignment (see Figure 3) was conducted between the polarity pairs and the U.N. Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) to better understand if certain pairs were more strongly associated with these U.N. and global benchmarks. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was also a strong driver for this basic review, but not directly assessed. This exploratory analysis indicated a strong alignment between the two POD pairs of human rights and community obligations as well as freedom and authority. This analysis was subjective and would need further validity checking and reliability assessment; however, the thematic alignment comparison did overwhelmingly stress these two pairs as lining up most often with many of the SDG. This could provide INGOs and others active in humanitarian aid and peace advocacy more justification to focus policy and resource efforts in these areas first. More study needs to be conducted to clarify this alignment; however, initial results indicate this relationship may be useful for social practitioners working to focus their efforts and find efficiencies.

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS - SDG (17 IN TOTAL)	POD POLARITY PAIRS (5 IN TOTAL) - THEORY	POD to SDG Count	FA	HC	DE	JD	PR
SDG 1. No Poverty	FA - Freedom and Authority		x				
SDG 2. Zero Hunger	FA - Freedom and Authority		x				
SDG 3. Good Health and Well-Being	HC - Human Rights and Communal Obligations			x			
SDG 4. Quality Education	HC - Human Rights and Communal Obligations			x			
SDG 5. Gender Equality	DE - Diversity and Equality				x		
SDG 6. Clean Water and Sanitation	HC - Human Rights and Communal Obligations			x			
SDG 7. Afforable and Clean Energy	FA - Freedom and Authority		x				
SDG 8. Decent Work and Econominc Growth	FA - Freedom and Authority		x				
SDG 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	FA - Freedom and Authority		x				
SDG 10. Reduced Inequalities	DE - Diversity and Equality				x		
SDG 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities	FA - Freedom and Authority		x				
SDG 12. Responsible Consumption and Production	FA - Freedom and Authority		x				
SDG 13. Climate Action	HC - Human Rights and Communal Obligations			x			
SDG 14. Life below Water	HC - Human Rights and Communal Obligations			x			
SDG 15. Life on Land	HC - Human Rights and Communal Obligations			x			
SDG 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	JD - Justice and Due Process					x	
SDG 17. Partnership for the Goals	PR - Participation and Representation						x
		POD Totals	7	6	2	1	1

Figure 3. *Alignment of Polarities of Democracy (POD) With U.N. Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs)*

Summary

The primary research (excluding the initial alignment assessment) resulted in four major themes emerging from the interview supported by over 20 codes. The research questions were aligned well with the four themes of global activism, effective global governance starts locally and simply, global governance remains conceptual, and POD shows potential as a global governance policy guide. These four themes resulted in the two major findings, the first of which is global governance remaining conceptual to the RI (INGO) international project experts, although they did see RI involvement with global governance as somewhat inevitable and somewhat positive. The second finding is that the respondents feel POD is a potential policy tool for global governance; however, it requires further development to be useful to the practitioners working on the ground to address the institutional gap in global governance. The alignment assessment also requires further dedicated research to clarify and validate initial findings.

Conclusion

This research contributed to a better understanding of the motivations behind why INGOs strive to fill the institutional gap left by governments (both national and international). The findings also provided encouragement to the voluntary sector for having positive values in the quest to fulfill as much global need as possible in places where little to no support exists. Although some of the respondents did not fully understand the concept of global governance, they did see positive impact in global cooperation and realized RI could often get much more done if it worked alongside other organizations with similar developmental goals. Finally, a broad policy tool, such as POD, is seen to have potential for a further refinement into a policy guide or tool for the practitioners out there executing the INGO mission. More interaction and cooperation are what is recommended at the global level and the use of POD to support more efficient and positive social change actions is also a goal based on the results from this study. Because the goal of this study was to better understand how and why INGOs influence or are influenced by the concept of global governance, findings from this study may provide insights into this complex policy debate and reinforce or question existing knowledge and theory.

Rotary's foundation charity was recently rated as one of the top charities at the global level with respect to transparency and positive social change outcomes, yet Rotary membership in Western nations is declining and the future of global civic organizations is not certain. As the world seems to need more goods and services from outside of nation states, the ability of INGOs such as Rotary to fill those needs could be in decline. There are also many restrictions being placed on INGOs from more insular nation states such as Russia and China. A

better understanding of how INGOs are addressing gaps in global governance may provide insights as to how best to support these providers of relief when nations either cannot do so or are unwilling to do so. This study may shed light on how to address the needs of millions without a nation to support them and a global order unprepared to come to their rescue. Furthermore, alignment with newly established U.N. SDGs could help focus both grass roots and higher level policy debate on what areas to prioritize in a challenging time of global disruption and resulting wicked problems.

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