Smart Humanitarianism: Re-imagining Human Rights in the Age of Enterprise

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Abstract

A paradigmatic shift around the central role of 'social entrepreneurs' is captivating a broad, diverse range of social actors refashioning the institutional landscape of human rights and humanitarian practices. For this special issue dedicated to 'Re-imagining Human Rights', we explore some of the implications of these revolutionary changes in human rights practices, and their consequences for sociological study and political critique in the 21st century. Following a discussion of the state of the sociology of human rights practices, we describe the remaking of the human rights arena into a site of technocratic organizations with an emphasis on the 'triple bottom line' (financial, social and environmental sustainability). This market-led rights paradigm also promotes a new kind of empathy required for social problem-solving and humanitarian action – one less sentimental, much more technocratic and managerial. We offer some critical observations on this 'smart humanitarianism', which emphasizes the human-machine partnership via online technologies, apps, and expert systems management strategies; they redistribute the cognitive responsibilities of determining and delivering goods for greatest measurable impact with a *quid-pro-quo* of reframing inequality. We introduce the other contributing articles, signposting notable elements and the implications for wider socio-political critique, especially regarding 'smart humanitarianism'.

Keywords

empathy, entrepreneurship, human rights, humanitarian, imagination, inequality, smart technology, sociology

Re-imagining Human Rights: From Theory to Practice

In August 2013, the authors organized an international conference in New York City entitled 'Re-Imagining Human Rights: The Challenge of Agency, Creativity, and Global Justice', the

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foundation of this special double-issue. Human rights scholars and practitioners, from both the Global North and South, presented their work and views addressing such varied topics as the human rights enterprise as a democracy movement; moving beyond the idea that all resources flow from the Global North to the Global South; how metaphorical thinking (e.g. 'human rights as a backpack') may produce human rights; and how the production of human rights discourse can transcend the standard rubric of civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights. This conference demonstrated that scholars and practitioners are, indeed, re-imaging human rights, but also that we need to continue re-imaging how we approach a sociology of human rights practices.

Law and philosophy have provided the dominant approaches to understanding human rights – essentially focusing on legal and political institutional forces emanating downward from decision-making processes at the international level, or on philosophical and normative concepts of what human rights ought to be. The social sciences, however, offer an additional approach that explores the empirical practice of human rights, including the discursive practices of human rights (Goodale, 2007). This approach pays greater attention than do legal or philosophical approaches to the contexts of meaning within which human rights are invoked and practiced (Goodale and Merry, 2007; Kurasawa, 2007).

Within the social sciences' approach to understanding human rights, a sociology of human rights has begun to take shape, even though it only recently has emerged as a formal sub-field within the discipline of Sociology. In 2008, the American Sociological Association created a new Section on Human Rights, and the International Sociological Association now has an active Thematic Research Group on Human Rights. Although most classical sociological theory (e.g. Marx, Weber, Durkheim) looked askance on human rights (Turner, 1993), contemporary sociologists have begun to contribute significantly to the understanding of their development and of their evolving practices (see, e.g., Armaline et al., 2011; Brunsma et al., 2013).

From the perspective of the social sciences, with an emphasis on the empirical practice of human rights in contexts of meaning, it suggests that we might identify meaningful practices of human rights that do not conform to our formal understandings institutionalized by states and international governmental organizations. Such practices are locally routinized and defended. They are advanced by social actors (individual and collective) in and between civil societies that serve as the basis for re-conceptualizing what human rights are from below; in fact, they demonstrate the need to continually do so. From this more dynamic perspective, the meaning of 'human rights' and actions taken in their name are under constant revision and re-visioning, but not necessarily 'harmonizing'. The diverse communities of human rights discourse, and (often passionately) meaningful practices of justice driving them, make clear that 'human rights' represent a contested terrain of meaning. Therefore the survival of the institution of human rights requires ongoing political, cultural, cognitive, and emotional work. What this means for the future of human rights, as an institution, is uncertain. It is ever susceptible to change – to becoming potentially stronger and more meaningfully inclusive and vibrant within the everyday lives of more diverse people, but also subject to withering or to implosion. As only one among many possible institutionalized visions of global justice, 'human rights' could undergo such profound transformation as to produce an altogether new institution for which the term 'human rights' no longer carries sufficient meaning.

The sociology of human rights has promoted greater interdisciplinary attention to the role that non-state actors – like voluntary civic associations, faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), corporations, universities, transnational advocacy networks, social movement organizations (SMOs) and activists – play in shaping the development and institutionalization of human rights (Risse and Sikkink, 1999; Sikkink, 2011; Wong, 2012; Goodman and Jinks, 2013). It has also helped us to recognize the important

influence of 'bottom-up', not just 'top-down', processes in promoting and localizing human rights consciousness, and in ways that legislating human rights simply does not (Merry, 2006; Kurasawa, 2007; Fischlin et al., 2013). From this vantage point, the sociology of human rights has also helped us to understand human rights not only as law, international norms, values, or ideology, but also as a social movement (Stammers, 1999; Rajagopal, 2003; Dale, 2011; Armaline et al., 2015).

Furthermore, there are several new directions in the sociology of human rights (and humanitarianism more broadly) that represent more critical theoretical approaches – ones that seek to promote more democratic and cosmopolitan practices in the transnational production of human rights and global justice (Boltanski, 1999; De Sousa Santos and Rodríguez-Garavito, 2005; Kurasawa, 2007; Twinning, 2009; Dale, 2010; Krause, 2014). These approaches have given greater attention to the way that transnational networks linking social actors in the Global North and the Global South are socially organized – typically through unequal relations of power, authority, class, and status. In other words, the human rights movement itself also serves as a contested site of competing visions of globalization. From this perspective, we can also understand the 'human rights movement' as really 'a movement of movements' (Mertes, 2004), often with contradictory strategies for institutionalizing human rights, or even competing moral visions of how they ought to be institutionalized. In some cases, these approaches have also helped us to identify alternative practices for organizing the meaningful production of human rights that offer great hope to advocates of democratic social change and global justice who have registered concern for the hegemonic patterns so often evident in the global institutional development of human rights.

Increasingly, scholars approach the study of human rights practice from a variety of disciplinary traditions, though they share with each other important insights and appreciation for new lines of questioning that mutually enhance our work – even if we do not always agree with each other's conclusions. This kind of interdisciplinary approach to human rights also raises a number of sociologically significant questions: How do social actors (individual and collective) understand and practice human rights in their everyday relationships? Are states (obviously often a violator of human rights) the only guarantor of human rights? Do considerations of justice in the Global South meaningfully shape those ideals institutionalized as human rights, or do human rights in the name of 'global justice' flow, using a common trope, only from the North to the South? Does the social organization upon which transnational solidarity links actors across communities of the Global North and South reflect the human rights values that they pursue? What is the quality of the social relationships upon which such solidarities are formed? To what extent is the creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship of NGOs and other human rights advocacy organizations 'measured' and constrained by the performative expectations of philanthropic donors and impact investment brokerages that provide the resources for their human rights work? Many of these questions are, indeed, addressed by the contributors of this special issue; however, we want to also highlight some significant features of humanitarianism emerging globally, with implications for the study and critique of human rights practices and institutions.

Human Rights as Social Enterprise

If this is the state of the sociology of human rights, one changing in dynamic ways, we want to briefly describe and discuss broad emerging paradigms that are recasting the entire global enterprise within market-led business models, most often labeled 'social enterprises'. The social enterprises we have in mind are those populated by social entrepreneurs and embedded in a dynamic elite (though anti-elitist) culture that celebrates the challenge of solving a variety of social problems, including many relating to inequality and injustice, by means of digital technology – with a heavy emphasis on 'smart' technology, cloud-based computing, and IT infrastructure development.

Thus, we must also engage with broader sociological and political critiques of these emerging practices, captivating the imaginations of a wide range of social actors – from the United Nations to international development banks and agencies, and from philanthropic foundations to NGOs, SMOs, and CBOs. These institutions are deliberately working to shape the institutional landscape of human rights and humanitarian practices through business enterprise strategies, new legal frameworks, and the professionalizing of institutional cultures of care and protection.

Since 2008, however, there also has been a significant change in the discourse of many international development agencies, philanthropic donors, as well as international and local NGOs that in part constitute the transnational advocacy networks that have played such an influential role since the 1980s in shaping the human rights movement. A new discourse on 'social entrepreneurship' that emphasizes a triple bottom-line focus on social problem-solving, environmental sustainability, and financial sustainability (Nicholls, 2006; Trexler, 2008: 65; Guo and Bielefeld, 2014; Mair et al., 2014) has been challenging traditional practices of humanitarian aid and disciplining the organizations that provide and receive it (Krause, 2014).

Social entrepreneurship subsumes nearly everything in its wake, both downstream and upstream dimensions: human rights, development, and humanitarian relief. It is becoming the 'go to' model for many human rights organizations as well – even if it is not always their preference or institutional culture. The practices of social actors, especially those living in the Global South who, for example, might identify with the human rights enterprise as a transnational democracy movement, are increasingly shaped by the agenda-setting powers of the relatively better-resourced organizational partners in the Global North (Bob, 2005; Wong, 2012). But they also are increasingly shaped by the 'value enhancement mechanisms' (e.g. transparency standards that reframe and increase the value of offerings to customers; measurement rubrics that reframe and increase the value of government investments; and methodologies that cause assets in hand to generate more value at no additional cost) that social entrepreneurs create (Martin and Osberg, 2015: 137), and that 'impact' investors and brokers (like Acumen Fund, which we discuss below) increasingly expect from the enterprises they fund and rate (Bugg-Levine and Emerson, 2011; B Lab, 2013). In growing numbers, humanitarians and others of all types formerly called 'aid workers' are identifying (or involuntarily reinventing) themselves as social entrepreneurs.

The question of what kinds of actions or registered events count as 'social entrepreneurship' is extensive (Guo and Bielefeld, 2014; Mair et al., 2006; Martin and Osberg, 2015; Nicholls, 2006; Praszkier and Nowack, 2012; Trexler, 2008; Unger, 2015). However, one narrative framing in particular – social entrepreneurs as disruptive 'change agents' – illustrates the gauntlet thrown down to human rights enterprises: market-led social enterprises provide their own justification presented as a value orientation to leave backwardness and 'embrace the future'. The spirit of the enormous 'modern man' literature and the many development paradigms promoted by Western consultants during the early Cold War resonates in ways largely not appreciated by the mostly youthful social entrepreneurs. As Martin and Osberg describe these change agents:

> Unlike social service providers, social entrepreneurs explicitly aim to permanently and systematically transform a miserable or unfair societal condition. Unlike social advocates, social entrepreneurs act directly, creating a product, service, or methodology that spurs the transformation of the status quo. … For social entrepreneurs, simply making things better is not good enough. They imagine the future as it should be, and they ask 'Why not?' Then they get to work, determined with every stride forward, with every inevitable setback, to go beyond better. Yet no individual – no matter how brilliant and driven – can effect societal change without partners, a supportive system, and most important of all, solidarity with those ill-served by the current status quo. Again and again, social entrepreneurs put their faith in those whose lot in life has not been determined by destiny but by an unjust status quo. (2015: 11, 199)

Distinguishing between the discourses of the change agents comprising the human rights enterprise and those populating these kinds of social enterprises striving to realize human rights and transform conditions of inequality can be difficult.

> At one level, looking to the future and imagining what could be different is an entirely obvious step in the pursuit of social benefit. … But it's worth emphasizing that, for the social entrepreneur, the task demands more. It is not enough to imagine a way to reduce suffering. The vision must be for systemic change; it must shift the existing equilibrium to a new one. (Martin and Osberg, 2015: 112–13)

Most of the 'Re-Imagining Human Rights' conference participants and contributors to this special issue would likely embrace this much. Yet, they would probably be uncomfortable with broader discourses of compassion through market competition we've been describing.

In concluding their co-edited volume, *Human Rights in Our Own Backyard: Injustice and Resistance in the United States*, winner of the Human Rights Section of the American Sociological Association's 2013 Hirabayashi Book Award, Armaline, Glasberg and Purkayastha propose a reconceptualization of what they call the 'human rights enterprise':

> It might be useful to conceptualize the human rights enterprise as something other than a pluralistic project of states that somehow accurately represent the interests of the governed, or a project reduced to codifying particular rights into national or international law. Instead, it seems … empirically accurate to conceptualize the human rights enterprise as a democratization movement against structured, imposed hierarchies, where the struggle to define and realize universal human rights practice might be better defined as a struggle between more or less powerful groups and the mechanisms that ensure power and resources for the very few. What are human rights, if not statements of how power and resources must be minimally distributed among the world's peoples? In this sense, efforts to realize human rights practice might be explicitly designed to target the ever-increasing consolidation of power and resources that defines contemporary human civilization, particularly in the United States where, for example, wealth disparity continues to grow beyond nearly all international comparison. (2011: 253)

This emphasis on the human rights enterprise as a democratization movement targeting the socially organized production and distribution of unequal power and resources evokes not only a humanitarian concern for those living in poverty, but also those who suffer the effects of inequality.

In 2000, when the United Nations announced its 'Millennium Development Goals for 2030', the focus was clearly on eradicating poverty. Inequality, however, was not on the agenda. The World Bank kept its focus squarely on poverty. Yet, 15 years later, and in the aftermath of a long global financial crisis, international governmental development institutions are putting economic and social inequality back on their agendas. The United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, (IMF) the Organization for Economic and Co-Operative Development (OECD), the Asian Development Bank, the British Council, and the World Economic Forum have all produced reports over the past two years that highlight the threats that not only poverty but social inequality pose to sustainable global economic growth (United Nations, 2014; Gill and Kharas, 2015; Lagarde, 2015; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015; Asian Development Bank, 2012; British Council, 2015; World Economic Forum, 2015).

It is worth quoting at length a 2015 report produced by the British Council and Social Enterprise UK (with Support from the World Bank Group) that captures this shift in discourse on economic development:

> So while we have experienced significant global economic growth over the past few decades, this has failed to deliver greater income equality, which in turn has held back further growth. This prevents us from

meeting the interconnected social and environmental challenges we hold in common. The poorest people on our planet through their financial circumstances are less free to make choices to improve their own conditions in terms of education, health, and so on. A rights based model of economic development and Amartya Sen's conception of *Development as Freedom* may have been lauded by many in theory, but in practice, these freedoms are still off limits for millions of people around the world. Here is a sort of economic democratic deficit. … As a consequence, more and more people are questioning our established economic models and instead, casting their nets for alternatives which can achieve more sustainable and equitable development. If we are to deliver against ambitions for more equal access to healthcare, education, food and other essentials, then we must surely consider how economic inequality is holding us back. (British Council, 2015: 6–7)

Driving these international organizations' new development discourse on inequality is a broader vision of the role that technological innovation can play in revitalizing economic growth. The influence of the social entrepreneurship model is gaining particular resonance in development policy circles that promote 'knowledge for development' and also seek to hitch economic growth to national and regional 'knowledge economies'. These contexts of development include not only regions of the Global South but also the Global North (as most readers who work in research universities are undoubtedly all too aware).

The development agencies of the US, UK, EU, and, now, Asia are trying to focus not simply on models of 'efficiency innovation'. One dominant example is Wal-Mart's strategy of doing more with less – a strategy that does not create jobs, but instead replaces them, as in the unfortunate case of Mexico. Social enterprises focused on models that embed 'efficiency innovation' within models of 'market-creating innovation'. This latter type of model hitches the former to existing growth sectors of the global economy – namely, internet and communications technologies (ICT). This strategy of growth has, of course, resulted in net job gains for countries like Taiwan and Singapore.

Alongside growth, however, this new emphasis on inequality (particularly in developing and emerging economies) is focused on the role that business can play in supporting inclusive economic and social development, and shaping the institutional ecosystems, cultures, and mindsets of people in developing countries in ways that contribute to financially sustainable social problem-solving. The idea is to channel 'social impact' investment capital to cultivate 'social entrepreneurship' in the hope of producing new forms of 'social innovation' that can address problems of inequality through the development of financially sustainable 'social enterprises'. As with the focus on poverty in the past, these development institutions still see markets as the source of solutions to social problems, including accessibility to healthcare, education, food – and even inequality.

The new discourse on social entrepreneurship encourages human rights organizations and advocates to solve problems of 'aid dependency' and the 'indignity of charity', and hence the forms of social inequality they are understood to generate and perpetuate, through the creation of financially sustainable social enterprises. Traditional 'do-gooders' are encouraged to become, what we may call, the 'do-betters'. Or, as Martin and Osberg suggest, they go 'beyond better' – by working 'smarter' to solve the trenchant forms of inequality and injustice that animate a wide variety of social problems and human rights concerns (Martin and Osberg, 2015; Bugg-Levine and Emerson, 2011). To work smarter is not only to create financially sustainable enterprises that wean aid recipients from 'dependency' on aid and advocacy organizations from charity and grants, it is also to create new forms of efficiency that make use of internet and communication technologies and so called 'Big Data' in ways that contribute to (as they purportedly benefit from) 'smart' development (see Dale and Kyle, 2015; but also McLaren and Agyeman, 2015). Beyond the obvious imperative to transform oneself into *homo economicus* – for both those occupied as practitioners and their 'clients' deserving of assistance – we suggest that this model is best understood as 'smart'

humanitarianism. We use the term to convey a heavy emphasis on human-machine partnership via online digital technologies, within systems management strategies, sharing the cognitive responsibilities of determining and delivering services of products (especially apps) for measurable investment outcomes.

Finally, we use the concept of 'smart humanitarianism' to draw critical attention to the promise and challenge of institutional, Money-ball, computational empathy. Empathy has a near sacred place in the foundational discourses of both human rights and the philosophy of human value and meaning. The sociology of human rights has offered not only alternative ontologies of human beings that are fundamentally social in nature (Turner, 1993, 1997; Woodiwiss, 2005; Smith, 2010; Joas, 2013) but has, in the process, also highlighted the central importance of our human capacity for empathy for developing an institution of human rights (Turner, 1993, 1997; Joas, 2013). It has suggested, drawing on John Dewey's legacy of sociological thought (see, e.g., Dewey, 1960; Johnson, 1993; Fesmire, 2003; Emirbayer and Schneiderhan, 2003), that empathy is critical to our ability to exercise both moral imagination that constitutes an (always fragile) institution of human rights, and sociological imagination (Mills, 1959), which is also fundamental to the broader sociological production of knowledge – including sociological knowledge about human rights.

In contrast, the discourse on social entrepreneurship (as collective actors working to transform status quo conditions of inequality and injustice) resists both standard critiques of asocial human agency and standard 'human versus machine' critiques, promoting as it does a new proficient, technologically-readable species of empathy, as its humanizing face, though in ways more deeply engineered than simply sloganeering. Thinking about the human becomes more complicated in an era of 'smart' and, putatively, reasoning machines. Can anyone or anything reason their way to empathy? This has been a longstanding bugbear related to the altruism problem for evolutionary biologists and behavioral economists; thus, we are not in a place to adjudicate *a priori* the ultimate warrants for a dismissal of this claim. In brief, it depends on how we define both 'reasoning' and 'empathy'.

Beyond metaphysical concerns, and despite the strenuous efforts and innovative techniques of cognitive and behavioral psychologists to do so, we cannot very well measure empathy in humans (or any other animals that might possess it). It remains difficult to confirm what we 'feel', imagine, or otherwise think that others are feeling. Our intention is not to take a stand here for or against empathy as a relevant motivation for positive change and understanding (cf. Johnson, 1993; Moyn, 2006; Bloom, 2014). Nor is it our aim to defend some notion that empathy is actually what distinguishes us as human. Rather, our concern is to acknowledge the considerable importance attributed to empathy in the sociology of human rights, and to highlight the fact that there is an effort underway to hitch these same basic techniques to ICT-based forms of data collection by, for example, using 'empathic sensor webs' (Cai and Abascal, 2006), amassed in the cloud, and dispersed through a socially-conveyed technological structure. The pursuit of such a project retains all of the problems that the cognitive, behavioral and social sciences already encounter in effectively measuring empathy and puts them on 'steroids', so to speak.

Increasingly, the 'smart money' is going to those who can develop ways of overcoming the problems associated with 'distant suffering' (Boltanski, 1999), electronically mediated representations of spectacles of human suffering that demand a moral response. Yet such spectacular representations so incessantly flood our various screens that some have suggested they may be contributing to a form of 'compassion fatigue' (Konrath et al., 2011), or what Barack Obama has referred to as an 'empathy deficit' (Obama, 2006) – rather than spawning an increase in compassionate empathy. New projects to cultivate 'digital empathy' seek to develop ways of transforming our electronically mediated interaction (particularly online interaction) to overcome the limitations that it currently places on our communication of empathy (Coulton, 2013). For example, the

Singularity University, a social enterprise (benefit corporation) created by Ray Kurzweil and based in Mountainview, California, established in 2016 a technology innovation partnership with Amnesty International. The partnership has begun to explore the application and value of virtual reality technologies as an engagement tool to empower activists, increase public engagement, and inspire action for human rights (Singularity University, 2016). Amnesty International has already established a proof of concept:

> The organization launched a Virtual Reality Aleppo campaign in 2015, designed to virtually transport people from the streets of Britain to the devastated streets of war-torn Aleppo in Syria, where thousands of civilians have died as a result of barrel bombings. People experienced the devastation of the bombings in Syria through virtual reality (VR) headsets, with overwhelming results. Amnesty International witnessed both a strong, emotional response from the public and a high level of donor engagement. (Singularity University, 2016)

Here, we simply want to signal to human rights scholars and practitioners (and sociologists and social scientists more generally) who continue to place such great emphasis on its role in our moral imagination and in the sociological production of knowledge (think for example of participant observation and ethnography) that social entrepreneurs – particularly those who are increasingly turning to ICT and Big Data in search of market innovation as a path to financial sustainability – also have their own discourse on empathy. However, it is a discourse that masks the 'homo economicus' dogma that grounds how the priests of social entrepreneurship determine who are genuine 'social entrepreneurs' and thus worthy of further investments, including many with human rights-related projects. Often, to be worthy of 'investment', victims of documented human rights abuses must also be read through a business filter that must simultaneously keep an eye on political concerns external to 'the altruistic deal-making' at hand. This is due to their own imperatives of institutional survival and the need to be viewed, themselves, as worthy sites of attention and resources. We might think of this as an enormous pyramid scheme of moral investments for status mobility measured by currencies of compassion.

A good representative of this approach, who possesses both moral authority and business acumen, is Jacqueline Novogratz. She is the founder and CEO of Acumen Fund, a non-profit global venture that raises charitable donations to invest in social entrepreneurs, social enterprises and innovative ideas 'that are changing the way the world tackles poverty'.[1] Her *New York Times* best-selling book, *The Blue Sweater: Bridging the Gap between Rich and Poor in an Interconnected World* (2009), is an inspirational playbook for social entrepreneurs. In some ways, Novogratz's formulations have become the recipe for the model itself.

> *Build a vision for the people and recognize that no single source of leadership will make it happen*: This is our challenge for creating a future in which every human being can participate. … The first step for each of us is to develop our own moral imagination, the ability to put ourselves in another person's shoes. It sounds so simple, and yet it is perhaps the most difficult thing we can do. It is so much easier to pretend that others are different, that they are happy in their poverty, that their religion makes them too difficult to engage in real conversation, or that their faith or ethnicity or class makes them a danger to us. Each of us needs to develop the courage to listen with our whole heart and mind. … But empathy is only our starting point. It must be combined with focus and conviction, the toughness to know what needs to get done and the courage to follow through. Today's world needs more than humanitarians. We need individuals who know how to listen and who have real and tangible skills to share. We will succeed only if we fuse a very hardheaded analysis with an equally soft heart. (2009: 283–4)

As 'smart' humanitarians, social entrepreneurs balance empathy with hard-nosed analysis and (entrepreneurial) skills (not unlike sociologists). They ultimately calculate when, and when not,

to take up the task of solving a social problem based on its perceived (measured) financial sustainability.

Like Novogratz, most are optimistic about the potential role that internet and communication technologies can play in addressing inequality and injustice.

> There is cause for optimism. … Think of the democratization of the globe by the Internet, which makes it so much harder for despots to shield their people from the enticements of the free world. Consider our ability to communicate without the intermediation of the government. Remark on the tremendous strides made by women across the globe in both the political and economic arenas. Look at the young people whose bottom lines are more about change than strictly about profits. There is reason to believe that people everywhere can lift themselves up, but they have to be given the tools to do so. We can only open the doors so that they can walk through them. (2009: 284)

Finally, Novogratz articulates a notion of transnational solidarity within a human enterprise *qua* transnational democracy movement, and to a generalized notion of social problem solving as necessary for accomplishing this task:

> Today we are redefining the geography of community and accepting shared accountability for common human values. We have the chance to extend the notion that all men are created equal to every human being on the planet. This will require global structures and products we are only beginning to imagine. Though the average citizen cannot, of course, match the enormous gifts made by successful entrepreneurs such as Warren Buffet and Bill Gates, each of us in his or her own way can contribute something by thinking – and acting – like a true global citizen. We have only one world for all of us on earth, and the future really is ours to create, in a world we dare to imagine together. (2009: 284)

The new promise of smart humanitarianism is that although not everyone has rights that can be validated and protected, everyone can be a humanitarian.

Yet, there is little discussion at this point of how the social and legal organization of markets can *introduce their own sources of social inequality* – even as they work, guided by 'missions with a social purpose', to attenuate social inequalities that stem from other relations. This is not to suggest that it is only the unequal social relations of production in profit-seeking enterprises that would blunt the effects of working to attenuate social problems of inequality. International non-governmental organizations, no less than multi-national corporations, are susceptible to generating new sources of inequality through the ways in which they organize the (unevenly empowered) social relations – including those through which they produce forms of transnational solidarity that span the Global North and South (see Dale, 2010; Bob, 2005; Kurasawa, 2007). The point, rather, is that social innovation will require democratic experimentation (Unger, 2015) in the ways that we socially organize financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable social enterprises to solve the deep-rooted problems of inequality that global economic growth has both produced and amplified.

Short of such a transformative vision of social innovation, a development agenda that focuses on commodifying social problems within the secular religion of social entrepreneurship and social innovation – a sociodicy – are viewed by some as a move to hijack the more (but still insufficient) transformative work that social activists have been doing for many decades. More to the point, they circumscribe the kinds of activism deemed imaginable as the entire notion of 'corporate accountability' now seems antiquated, including cases where corporations have engaged in abusive human rights practices or extreme environmental degradation. These are no longer problems for corporations – they are now opportunities for social entrepreneurs.

However, the approaches described here are resistant to conventional critiques and interventions based on evaluating impacts beyond individuals and methods that are less than democratic.

What sociological methods or approaches might help us to generate critical insight for discerning distinctions that matter and developing productive critique? In the following section, we conclude by selecting a few points made by the contributors to this special issue so that we may review how the new social enterprise landscape will need to be considered and addressed for change and for more academic analyses.

Points of Critique for a Critical Sociology of Human Rights

In many ways, smart humanitarianism invites critique as another problem to be solved, but within the market-based framework we have elaborated. Like political liberalism's discourse on human rights, it often seems hegemonic. The broad theme of this special issue, and one that each contributor has attempted to highlight, is that of re-imagining human rights. As Benjamin Gregg (this issue) argues, 'Creating justice begins with an act of imagination'. We may restate the core idea in this way: How do we provide a productive critique of something that would appear immune to criticism? Engaging and yet pulling back from state-centric human rights approaches, what are the promises and perils for the human rights enterprise?

This theme is especially evident in Deric Shannon's article (this issue), which confronts the question directly. Shannon critically examines the human rights enterprise itself *in practice* by exploring the direct action wing of the food justice movement, Food Not Bombs (FNB), in which he conducted research as a participant observer. As he points out, 'the direct action of grassroots social movements is offered by the human rights enterprise as an alternative to statist justice institutions'. In contrast to the sociology of human rights, statist justice institutions remain central to the dominant approaches to human rights scholarship and practice. The human rights enterprise, at least as Armaline and colleagues (2011, 2015) have conceived it, is meant 'to allow for radical, bottom-up possibilities for human rights theory and practice' (Shannon, this issue). Yet, Shannon identifies a tension in both the anarchist activism of the FNB and the human rights enterprise: they both rely on 'the strategic use of rights discourse' and thus have 'problems as a radical, anti-statist, and anti-capitalist *theory*'. The human rights enterprise, he suggests, does not so much reject a discourse rooted in liberal statist assumptions but rather 'attempts to mobilize that discourse for radical ends'.

Perhaps more interesting is his critique of FNB. Shannon presents an emerging critique of activism among some anti-statist quarters that conceives of activists as specialists, and that asks radicals 'to consider what it means to believe that the levers of social change are held by specialists – by activists'. He then extends this critique of activism, invoking Theodore Adorno's (1978) point that the practice of elevating praxis over theorizing leads to suspicion of those who are not seen as 'doing something'. As Shannon writes, 'This leads to an ideology of what might be called "do something-ism", where pseudo-revolutionary activity is carried out for its own sake, often resulting in harmless social activities that function as hobbies, despite a sometimes revolutionary intent'. Shannon himself is not entirely comfortable with this critique, but nevertheless notes that 'FNB participants often mirror the politics of activism and their work' and, 'despite attempts at being a radical form of solidarity [with those they feed], can often look like a radical form of charity'.

There is an affinity between the activist ideology of 'do-somethingism' that Shannon describes and the ideology of 'do-betterism' that we have identified among social entrepreneurs who see themselves as change agents. Yet, social entrepreneurs, unlike radicals, would not find a 'tension' here – they probably would not be concerned about others identifying them as specialists. Unlike radicals, or even neoliberal elites, who each deploy (different) anti-statist discourses, social entrepreneurs (at least of the smart humanitarian variety) often deliberately and publicly work to foster partnerships with states. Like the human rights enterprise, smart humanitarianism does not so

much reject a discourse rooted in liberal statist assumptions but rather attempts to mobilize that discourse for 'radical ends': short-circuiting collective justice projects by re-framing inequality as a 'social' problem of market exclusion for which they then can provide radically technocratic and capitalist market-oriented solutions. Should such a project itself produce new sources of inequality, then they quickly seize on this as an opportunity to solve another social problem. Although individual social enterprises will fail, the overall financial sustainability of the social enterprise sector remains secure – as long as the ideology can absorb substantial critique.

Sylvanna Martina Falcón (this issue) challenges us to consider not only discursive *practice* of human rights, especially the narrow political discourse about human rights based on a tradition of political liberalism, but also the *production* of human rights discourse. In examining the construction of human rights, she proposes a novel 'triad constellation configuration' for analyzing the varied engagements of human rights by different constituencies at the United Nations. 'Multiple constituencies', she explains, 'engage with human rights … by referencing a different set of epistemologies and ontologies upon which they produce and practice human rights.' Unlike the first two constellations that she identifies – 'dominant understandings' affiliated with the Western-legal apparatus, and 'counter-public approaches' embracing antiracist and feminist epistemologies – it is the 'social praxis' constellation, mediating between the others, 'where the discourse of human rights moves beyond the rubric of civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights'. Falcón's emphasis on social praxis as a grounded approach to the discursive production and practice of human rights is consistent with those of Goodale (2007) and Kurasawa (2007), and represents a productive contribution to a critical sociology of human rights. As she explains:

> The ways in which human rights becomes negotiated and strategically used in advocacy efforts in this space uncovers a critical bridging between legal and non-Western dominated approaches to human rights advocacy. … The purpose of conceptualizing human rights as a constellations model is because engagement with human rights is not singular. It involves discourse, political advocacy, distinct approaches, and tensions about its very meaning.

This approach suggests the possibility that a hegemonic discourse on human rights is vulnerable to critique when we study the modes through which it is produced and practiced in contexts of engagement and advocacy. What critical space might we find using this approach to study contexts in which 'do betters' directly engage the dominant constellation of human rights, or even the democratic social movement discourses of the human rights enterprise? Or in which advocates of such a human rights enterprise engage the seemingly hegemonic discourses of 'smart' humanitarianism?

Anderson Bean (this issue) examines Venezuela's radical grassroots movement of local public planning councils and communal councils that have been struggling, through modes of participatory democracy, to extend existing human rights language in the progressive Bolivarian Constitution introduced under the Chavez administration, and to institutionalize new human rights practices in civil society. He tells us that, 'Not only did existing social movements participate in the construction of the Constitution, but new social movements were created in the process'. We can understand the human rights enterprise, we have suggested, as a movement of movements. It not only serves to bring diverse movements together, but also, as Bean suggests, generates new ones in the process of doing so.

Yet, as we have seen in the case of smart humanitarianism, the human rights enterprise also invites and generates new movements with sometimes very different conceptions of the purpose and nature of human rights enterprises. Unlike the social entrepreneurs we describe, however, the movements that Bean describes are practicing human rights and creating what we might call (although they don't) 'socialist social enterprises' – workers taking over formerly capitalist

factories and converting them into worker-owned cooperatives regulated by (now) constitutionally protected autonomous communal councils. We may ask: Are social enterprises only understood to be financially sustainable if they are embedded in capitalist forms of property ownership and modes of production? Is another social enterprise possible?

Jenny Cockburn (this issue) examines the cultural tensions and barriers of human rights practice that emerge in the process of collaborating to address shared concerns. Her ethnographic methods are applied to the study of relations of power between Andean men and women in two communities of farmers located in Norte de Potosí, Bolivia, who embrace a notion of gender complementarity known as *chachawarmi*, deriving from Andean cosmology. Complicating these relations further, they are working with outside sustainable agriculture experts from a Bolivian rural development NGO.

Cockburn, attentive as well to the transnational relations shaping this context of interaction producing the tensions she is trying to explore, uses the analytical strategy of examining this NGO as a 'cultural broker' of the relationship between these Andean communities with whom they work and the Global Northern NGO partners and funding organizations to whom they answer. Understood in this way, intersecting tensions, and thus potential points of critique, abound. Where the indigenous notion of gender complementarity assumes that men and women are fundamentally different, though both necessary and independent, the Northern partners and funders embrace the rationalist individualist modern liberal notion of gender equality that views men and women as fundamentally the same. Tensions emerge within the NGOs (both Northern and Southern) as well, because each also embraces (at least discursively) 'the value of local culture in relation to knowledge and sustainable livelihoods'. Cockburn further sharpens the problem by analyzing these unequal relations of power within the context of Bolivia's strong indigenous social movements and its Leftist government that claims to be pursuing a 21st-century socialism and experimenting with a post-neoliberal framework for (human) rights discourse. How might thinking about social entrepreneurs and social enterprises as cultural brokers in contexts of uneven relations of power, rather than simply as problem-solving partners, help us to identify productive points of critique that might enable us to better address how their human rights practices shape the human rights enterprise?

Melissa Gouge (this issue) draws on participant observation with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a transnational network of migrant farmworkers from different indigenous communities throughout the Americas, as well as other immigrant laborers from allied communities, who have been successfully struggling to extend these workers' right and challenge the abusive human rights practices (including coerced labor and wage theft) of some of the largest corporations that 'employ' them. Gouge examines the creative role that the CIW's deliberate use of playfulness and subversive storytelling, through the cultural forms of *son jarocho* music, *mistica* theater, and a grassroots community museum, play in their protest campaigns. This includes overcoming the challenges of building a common worker identity and transnational solidarity among their members. Her work challenges us to consider the importance of play, joy, and fun – not just compassion for others' suffering and 'hard-nosed' work – in building and sustaining the human rights enterprise, and in questioning elements of the dominant narrative regarding the uniqueness of the 'managerial creativity' (Kyle and Dale, 2016) of social entrepreneurs, in contrast to that of their clients or other cooperative-based projects.

Finally, Nelly Kfir and Adrianna Kemp raise important questions concerning the temporalities of human rights struggles. In their ethnographic study of Israeli NGOs advocating on behalf of migrant workers threatened with sudden deportation, they adopt a narrative approach to understanding social movements that takes into account the internal dynamics of social mobilization and the activists' own narratives of events as catalysts for the transformation and spread of social movements. They introduce the notion of 'socio-temporal configurations' (in this case, distinguishing between events experienced as 'routine' versus 'emergency') to analyze how they shape and reflect simultaneously two different repertoires of collective action: (1) the bureaucratic,

strategically coordinated and professionalized routines of human rights NGOs (similar to Shannon's critical image of 'activists as specialists' discussed above) and (2) the spontaneous, non-conventional dynamics of social movements. But rather than assuming a dichotomy, they show how both of these activist repertoires feed and complement one another, and thereby enlarge the scope of political action.

This approach suggests a different way of conceptualizing the relationship between social enterprises and the human rights enterprise. Rather than assuming that the two represent mutually exclusive repertoires of collective action, or presuming a trend whereby social movement activists (and NGOs) are gradually being subsumed by the institutional culture of social entrepreneurship, perhaps it makes sense to think more deeply about the ways that they complement or contribute to each other's projects – and together broaden the possibilities for human rights practice. The argument is that when activists experienced these events as an 'emergency' rather than as 'routine', it altered their course of action and contributed to the transformation of social mobilization.

We have described here not only how scholars and activists are re-imagining human rights and the enterprises that promote them, but also how corporate models are said to be capturing the imaginations and institutions at the heart of those engaged in related work. This broad paradigm has forced even those with little training or inclination to engage market-based technological solutions to remake individual and institutional identities that better align with social entrepreneurship's performative subject. The emerging consensus is a juggernaut: it's the only smart thing to do.

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Note

1. See: http://acumen.org/about/.

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