

Preface

PRAXIS was created more than a decade ago by a few Fletcher students interested in operationally relevant cutting-edge research about the practice of development and social change across borders. Like so many new initiatives, especially if run by the migratory and extremely busy population of graduate students, the early years were difficult. Establishing a rhythm of publishing, a reputation for quality, a system of management—all these took some years, with lessons learned over and over again. I guess this reflected quite nicely the challenges faced by the development community to which it addressed itself.

In 2000, the Institute for Human Security (IHS) was established at Fletcher. The Institute conducts cutting edge-research, education, and advice at the intersection between humanitarianism, development, human rights, and conflict resolution. All of the Institute's activities make a fundamental choice in favor of crossing academic and professional barriers.

It was nothing but logical that a closer collaboration began to grow: brainstorming sessions, contribution of articles, financial support. After a few years of mutual courtship, we have now decided to embark on a long-term relationship together.

PRAXIS, then, is now, as always, devoted to scholarly high-quality yet operationally relevant and timely research on the intersections between humanitarianism, development, conflict resolution, and human rights. It seeks to showcase talent from within our community here at Tufts, as well as people who are part of our network—people who spoke here, alumni now in positions of responsibility, scholars with a close affinity to this line of inquiry. There are not many publications where this sort of work can be published, and PRAXIS, like the IHS, firmly intends to become a crucial player in this field.

The current issue reflects very well what this venture is all about. Many of the articles have been written by colleagues and students. All of them deal with complicated questions at the intersections between development or humanitarianism and human rights.

Let me begin with an article written by a crucial colleague, Peter Walker. Not only is it a thought-provoking and timely analysis of the politics of humanitarian assistance, but its author is also the director of the most important partner of the IHS, the Feinstein International Famine Center (FIFC). Located at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, the FIFC works to understand the ways in which communities experience and respond to risk and vulnerability in order to prevent and mitigate famine, resolve

local conflicts, and develop responses that contribute to durable survival strategies for people coping with crisis. Without the FIFC, the IHS would not be the same, and the reader of Peter Walker's smart and provocative article will readily understand why.

Hugo Slim is a close friend of the FIFC and the IHS; as always, he has some thoughtful things to say about matters of rights and ethics in the practice of humanitarian aid. Nathaniel Myers' piece is a fine analysis of one of the international community's newest instruments to deal with tough issues of justice and rights and peace in a post-conflict context. Jake Sherman deals with the adjacent interaction between development and conflict resolution, while Jina Moore's study of discriminatory East European laws analyzes the relation between human rights and conflict. The reading reviews are written by a set of graduate students from my class on "Development and Human Rights;" they analyze recent writings on the Rights-Based Approach to Development (including, to close the circle, a text by Hugo Slim).

This issue of PRAXIS, like the previous one, showcases new ideas, often by young and operationally experienced scholars, many connected with the IHS and the FIFC. I hope it will be the beginning of many more years of joint collaboration in the production of stimulating reflections on the practice of social change across borders. I thank the editors for the excellent job they did.

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