

University of Dayton

eCommons

Conference: The Social Practice of Human Rights

The Social Practice of Human Rights

Oct 2nd, 8:45 AM - 10:20 AM

Practicing Human Rights: How Human Rights Practitioners Shape the Field (abstract)

Robin Redhead
Leeds Beckett University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/human_rights



Part of the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#), [Policy Design, Analysis, and Evaluation Commons](#), [Policy History, Theory, and Methods Commons](#), [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), and the [Work, Economy and Organizations Commons](#)

Redhead, Robin, "Practicing Human Rights: How Human Rights Practitioners Shape the Field (abstract)" (2015). *Conference: The Social Practice of Human Rights*. 1.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/human_rights/2015/engaginginhumanrightswork/1

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Human Rights Center at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Conference: The Social Practice of Human Rights by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact mschlangen1@udayton.edu, ecommons@udayton.edu.

The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy

2015 Conference of the University of Dayton Human Rights Center

Oct. 2-3, 2015, Dayton, Ohio

For the archive of the conference, see http://ecommons.udayton.edu/human_rights/2015/

Research Panel: Engaging in Human Rights Work

Presenter: Robin Redhead, Senior Lecturer, Politics and Applied Global Ethics, Leeds Beckett University

Title: Practicing Human Rights: How human rights practitioners shape the field

Abstract: This working paper summarises my initial findings of a study into the politics of human rights practice looking specifically at how practitioners shape the human rights field. Through a series of interviews with lawyers, politicians, bureaucrats and activists I have mapped the 'work' that takes place within the field of human rights and analysed how this 'work' shapes what Nash (2009) refers to as the cultural politics of human rights. Within the national and international arenas, human rights practices are cultural capital that practitioners trade for political gains. In order to assure the future of the human rights movement we need to understand how people become involved and what motivation keeps them there. As such I have asked interviewees to comment on how they see the field of human rights, how their 'work' fits within the field and their own career trajectories.

The study is an investigation into the field of human rights as a social field in the UK. Using field theory, I show how through the conscious and unconscious aspects of their practice, practitioners exercise considerable agency in adapting human rights discourse to their own concerns while also being critical of it. The professionalization of 'work' undertaken in the human rights field and the discomfort expressed by some practitioners about having made a career from their human rights activism, because the goal was to put themselves out of work, raises ethical and moral implications for practitioners whose original passions and motivations may get lost within the contours of building a viable career.

Biography: Dr Robin Redhead researches the politics of human rights, focusing on how people empower themselves through discourses of human rights. She looks at the practices of political activism of minority groups and investigates how the visual media represent their grievances. Her recent book *Exercising Human Rights: Gender, Agency and Practice* (Routledge 2015) explores Amnesty International's 2004 Campaign *Stop Violence Against Women* and a moment of Mohawk Protest in Oka, Quebec.