

ETHICS IN A CROWDED WORLD

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ORGANIZATIONS VOLUME 22

**ETHICS IN A CROWDED
WORLD: GLOBALISATION,
HUMAN MOVEMENT
AND PROFESSIONAL
ETHICS**

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CHAPTER 1

ETHICS, CROWDING AND GLOBALISATION

Vandra Harris

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has thus far been characterised by a persistent amplification of global flows and an equal attempt to control these flows. The flows are diverse and interconnected, forming and re-forming like moving water to find opportunities and gaps for movement. In response, control may be sought by pushing back in an attempt to resist these flows as far as possible, or by harnessing and channelling the flows to achieve individual and collective benefits. Whether we resist, appropriate, or simply observe those forces, for most (if not all) of us they have meant significant change and adaptation.

This journal issue is focussed on the theme of ethics in a crowded world, which was also the theme of the 2018 Australian Association of Applied Ethics (AAPAE) conference, at which most of the chapters in this volume were presented. The conference was held in Melbourne in September 2018, hosted by RMIT's School of Global, Urban and Social Studies and RedR Australia. Crowdedness was conceived broadly in the sense of a greater exposure to the lives and realities of others both proximate and distant, facilitated by the perpetual motion of globalisation, characterised by [Appadurai \(1996\)](#) as falling into five key flows: movement of people, media, money, technology, and ideas and ideologies.

With 'fake news' and people's uprisings, terrorism and global philanthropy, the last two decades have been exciting and terrifying. While much attention has been given to the flows of refugees and migrants, and attempts to either increase or limit the spread of militant political movements, the diverse features of globalisation have expanded awareness, engagement and trade with people around the world. The conference and this volume explore the ethical aspects of these shifts from diverse professional and practical perspectives, and a key platform

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of the conference was bringing together humanitarian practitioners and ethical theorists, to consider the intersections of their work, passions and challenges.

A CROWDED WORLD

The title immediately invokes human crowding and movement; however, we wish also to imply the crowding of images and ideas, of technology and surveillance, of noise and things, that characterise our contemporary, globalised lives. The adage that the world is shrinking captures the sense that the distances between people and places are small and always traversable (even when we would rather it weren't) – while at the same time so much is growing, from population to waste.

In this sense, the crowded world is a notion encompassing continued population growth and human movement, often in defiance of the arbitrary boundaries of states. It also concerns ideologies and technologies that appear to reduce the distance between people and nations and increase a sense of connectedness and familiarity with distant populations, places and politics.

These globalising forces contribute to our experience of crowdedness. The world's population continues to grow, aided in part by improvements in health assisted by sharing of knowledge and technology – which by no means denies contact, intersection and hybridisation before we began to think in terms of globalisation. Rather, the pace, penetration and complexity of these flows and changes are central to the challenge that characterises globalisation now.

A large part of this is the way that actions in one location have impact in other locations, and that strategies to constrain crowding have long lives that convert to new challenges over time. Concerns with population are not new, though the arrival in Europe of over five million refugees in 2015–2016 ([the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\), 2018](#)) brought a whole new experience of it to many countries, exposing Europeans to refugees on a scale rarely seen outside developing countries (which host the vast majority of refugees). This experience solidified a movement in Europe and around the world towards increasing domination of discourses of border and population control, while multiculturalism has long fallen out of favour as a policy framework. At the same time as political leaders and aspirants have played out this obsession with borders, so much of the global population has sought to transcend them, whether temporarily through travel or work, or permanently through longer term migration. Border walls, maritime patrols and tighter legislation do not stop the flow; they only increase the costs (financial and personal) and re-shape the paths and destinations, making human movement more dangerous, and more profitable for those whose business is enabling it.

A salient example of the complexity of responding to the crowded world can be seen in China's efforts to contain population growth. From 1979 to 2015, China's one-child policy required parents to have just one child (though many exceptions were introduced over the period). Parents who had more children than they were allowed faced fines, and many children remained undocumented, incurring a range of problems around critical areas such as access to education and employment for these subsequent children.

The policy proved extremely effective in rapidly changing the population, but the size was not all that changed about the population, with dramatic implications from the changed composition. Now China faces vastly different challenges of supporting care for aging generations significantly larger than those that follow and would traditionally bear much of that caring responsibility – such that the single children of this era may find themselves responsible not only to care for their parents, but also their grandparents, without the assistance of siblings.

These filial responsibilities are among many reasons contributing to a significant son preference during the one-child period, resulting in an imbalanced sex ratio meaning that men of marriageable age will exceed women of the same age by 50% for three decades (Guilmoto, 2012). This not only creates and exacerbates a range of problems, but also changes dynamics within China, which now faces a range of social impacts of those unmarried men who are disappointed in this outcome. It also faces further dramatic changes in the composition of the population arising from increasing numbers of international marriages and even human trafficking to meet the demand for wives in this generation. Thus an attempt to control population size has markedly impacted both size and structure of that population, and ultimately creates a new pathway of human movement that increases global contact and awareness.

These ongoing changes have meant that homogenous nations of the past (often identifying themselves as homogenous by rendering invisible minority groups and indigenous people) are now relegated to historical fiction. There are now few people who in their day-to-day lives encounter only people just like themselves – with the same background, beliefs and values.

Growth, movement and change in population are not the only impacts of globalisation that contribute to the sense of crowdedness. Different challenges have emerged in Pacific nations dealing with climate change arising from petroleum dependent lifestyles. In other regions a central challenge is the changing face of conflict – from predominantly inter-state conflict, as characterised the major wars of the twentieth century, to intrastate and asymmetrical conflict and terrorism. It is not only political and religious disagreement that drive current conflicts, with resource scarcity bringing increasing tension, as for example in the Middle East, where population far exceeds water availability and resource-tension is simmering.

WHY DOES CROWDEDNESS NEED ETHICS?

The increasing contact created by globalisation increases the potential for new encounters; indeed the transformations, flows and amplifications of globalisation as we currently experience it make ethical understanding and practice increasingly important. How then do we think about ethics for a crowded world, particularly when diversity is the cornerstone of the global era? Any ethical response cannot rest on a single approach, but rather must bring together ways of engaging and intersecting that enable listening and learning, take a wide view and embrace complexity.

As noted, a central characteristic of globalisation is not just change but the pace and scale of it, not only throwing up challenges now but also making it increasingly difficult to imagine the reality that will face future generations (and

thereby challenging our capacity to provide useful education to them). These changes bring with them many questions, such as those listed by David Crocker (2002) opening a discussion on globalisation, development and ethics:

in what direction and by what means should a society ‘develop’? Who is morally responsible for beneficial change? What are the moral obligations, if any, of rich societies (and their citizens) to poor societies? How should globalisation’s impact and potential be assessed ethically? (p. 9)

The increased interconnectedness and sense of crowding that characterise globalisation bring numerous such questions. Applied ethics, as the interface between values and practice, gives us a way to approach these challenges and a framework for sense-making. For so many people this is an implicit process, with values remaining unexamined or a lack of clarity on how to approach questions ethically. Smales in this volume advocates for ‘building an understanding or awareness in people about how to think about the ethics that may apply in a situation’ by fostering cultures of ethical inquiry.

Outside the mainstream, however, there are communities of people who apply ethical inquiry as a matter of course, particularly academics whose focus is ethical perspectives and applications in a variety of changing contexts. These are the people who attend conferences such as the 2018 AAPAE Ethics in a Crowded World conference, and who read volumes such as this.

There are also communities of practitioners who work constantly in the values–practice interface but may not articulate the ethical theories familiar to academics. One such community is humanitarian practitioners, driven by a Humanitarian Charter grounded in international law and ‘the fundamental moral principle of humanity: that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’, leading necessarily to the humanitarian imperative that people have a right to receive and a duty to provide humanitarian assistance (Sphere Association, 2018, p. 28).

In many ways humanitarian practice can be seen as the epitome of globalised practice: response to humanitarian crises brings together professionals, individuals and communities from around the world to respond to deep human need, funded by governments, organisations and individuals who are informed by international media and social media platforms. These crises are increasing in frequency, related to environmental changes, political actions and heightened intrastate conflicts, all of which are influenced by the current era of increasing contact and industrialisation – and which in turn contribute to global flows, particularly of people seeking safety and better lives.

Humanitarian practice is framed by four clearly articulated humanitarian principles: humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. To the lay person, these translate as the requirement to address human suffering; to abstain from conflict and controversies; to respond according to need alone; and to remain independent from political and other objectives relating to the crisis, location or funding source. Their practice is practical, fast-paced and directed at saving lives, and it is ethically formed – but while most practitioners could name the humanitarian principles without pausing for thought, they are unlikely to articulate this as a broader ethical framework. That is precisely what it is, though, normatively

describing humanitarian values and best practice, and providing a clear framework for decision-making.

Together with the globalised nature of humanitarian practice (bringing together diverse people and resources to respond to immediate human need, often as a result of human-induced disaster and political conflict) this makes the humanitarian sector an interesting case study for ethics and globalisation. Bringing together ethical theorists and humanitarian practitioners was the focus of a central stream of the Ethics in a Crowded World conference, for the particular purpose of broadening the interface between theory and practice in this important space. While humanitarian practice is often held up as apolitical, its focus on need as the only determinant of response and its increasing focus on resilience and preparedness are inherently political, while the disproportionate impact of disasters and conflict on those already vulnerable by necessity draws the attention of humanitarian practitioners.

Given the range of challenges faced by the humanitarian sector in a world of global flows and crowding, the aim was to bring these groups together with a view to fostering praxis, in the sense of 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' (Freire, 1970, p. 36). The humanitarian practice stream of the conference focussed on localisation, the commitment to a stronger role for local actors in humanitarian response, and increased emphasis on local leadership, implementation and goal-setting. This focus permeated the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change commitments arising from it, demonstrating the strong adherence of the humanitarian community to this idea.

At the conference this stream included keynotes from humanitarian professionals working with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, academic papers and concurrent practitioner-led workshops on localisation. Participants included professionals from a range of humanitarian organisations as well as diverse academics. Other keynotes addressed the challenges of working ethically as a public servant, and the human rights challenges thrown up by technological change. Academic papers in other streams addressed migration, business and government behaviour, identity, new technologies and beliefs in practice. The chapters in this volume come from a range of these streams, addressing diverse questions arising from global crowdedness.

Applied Ethics in Global Practice

The second paper in this volume, Breakey, Ransome and Sampson consider the ethical obligations of states with regard to migrating professionals. Taking migrating health professionals as their case study they explore their legitimate expectations and how these are established in light of migration regimes of destination countries. Migrant professionals take risks and make sacrifices and investments based on reasonable beliefs they have come to in light of the legal and regulatory environment. When this environment changes, as it has done in Australia and Canada for example, these professionals can experience loss on a range of measures. In this context Breakey et al. explore the way governments

create expectations through legal and regulatory environments and visa requirements, and the extent to which this translates into duties. Progressing systematically through the facets of the debate, the authors conclude that governments exercise jurisdiction over migrants and citizens and create expectations through laws and regulations – and they therefore have a duty to fulfil those expectations. In addition, states have a moral responsibility to make environments and conditions clear within a stable legal environment and to honour those expectations, for there are both personal and social costs of the disappointment of legitimate expectations. This interesting contribution to migration debates has diverse implications in light of persistent human flows around our world.

Considering a differently globalised profession, Harris and Tuladhar address localisation, or the reorientation of humanitarian practice to leadership and determination by local actors, questioning why this focus persists when it has been central to the critique (including significant self-critique) of both development and humanitarian sectors for so long. Pointing to the central focus on people in humanitarian ethics (particularly equity and entitlement to humanitarian response according to need alone), the authors look to humanitarian practitioners to understand why the sector has been unable to achieve tangible moves towards localisation. Drawing on qualitative data drawn from practitioner-led workshops at the Ethics in a Crowded World conference and a small interview project, they discuss the well-known ways that power, especially financial power, defines humanitarian relationships and processes. They also reveal a tension between handing over to local leadership and confidence that those actors will implement in line with international principles of humanitarian practice – and the ways this intersects with funders' risk-aversion. Despite this they point to both optimism and examples of success in achieving localisation, often driven by local actors and governments. They conclude by pointing to the need to address the core conflict that arises when the implicitly global humanitarian principles turn out not to be the core values of local partners.

In the second of three papers focussed on humanitarian practice, Barber addresses the need for ethically informed research in this sector through a close examination of the core practices and principles of humanitarian action. Assessment, monitoring and evaluation are core practices in humanitarian action, but are rarely identified as research within the sector. By highlighting the components, practices and use of these tools, Barber clearly demonstrates that they are research and shows how the sector's own principles and guidelines call for ethical practice consistent with direction given in research ethics guides. She emphasises the importance of this because people are made vulnerable by disasters, and the already vulnerable are disproportionately affected, so it is critical that practitioners approach this work in a sensitive and well-informed manner. This is one of three key considerations she identifies in humanitarian crisis, alongside the justificatory threshold and safety and security of researcher and participant. She also points to three areas of particular importance and challenge to research in these environments, namely ensuring confidentiality especially when participants may be identifiable through their characteristics; gaining informed consent based on a clear understanding of what information is needed for such consent; and

how to ensure participants receive feedback. Barber's argument requires a shift in thinking in the humanitarian sector to recognition of much of their core work is grounded in research, and a related shift to better prepare and resource practitioners to perform this work ethically in support of the broader principles and goals of humanitarian action.

With a slightly different perspective on ethical research in the related field of development practice, Smales' chapter builds on the concept of ethical inquiry, familiar in philosophy to develop the notion of a culture of ethical inquiry for international development research and evaluation. International development often takes place in complex environments in which diverse cultures meet, and very often has a preferential focus on vulnerable people. For professionals who face distinct challenges and whose work is fundamentally grounded in trust and relationships, it is not only policies and procedures that foster ethical practice but also organisational cultures that are 'mindful of ethics' through openness, discussion and a learning orientation. Identifying challenges to teaching ethics, Smales outlines the Australian Research for Development Impact (RDI) network's principles and guidelines for ethical research and evaluation in development, and the training information for non-governmental organisation (NGO) practitioners and early career academics, centred on the four principles of respect, beneficence, merit and integrity, and justice. With a suite of tools available to development practitioners and researchers, this is designed to assist development researchers and practitioners to imagine what ethical practice looks like in a specific context and the steps they need to take to realise it, in line with those four principles.

Paper 5 of this volume is one of two considering virtue ethics, in this instance as it enables understanding and response in the current political environment. Exploring identity politics as it has emerged in recent years, particularly in the examples of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, Provis examines identity and its role in virtue ethics. Unpacking the politics of identity, Provis juxtaposes social group identity – which is at the heart of some modern politics and involves alignment with physical and abstract groups reflecting components of identity – and narrative identity as addressed by some virtue ethics, in which the individual's (self-constructed) life story gives most meaning. Provis argues that these are both relational and that they overlap and inform one another, influenced by context, history, rituals and tradition. He further argues that the virtue ethics focus on what kind of person to be (as opposed to what to do) intersects especially with narrative identity, because it so closely concerns the stories people narrate about their lives and identities. Indeed it is the intersection of personal narrative identities and group identities that transforms the contestation of identities into political conflict. A virtue ethics lens encourages attention to 'what is necessary for individuals to create and develop worthwhile life stories' and this in turn may prevent or defuse hostility and conflict by turning attention to spaces of agreement and collective potential.

Naeem and Syed also focus on a novel application of virtue ethics, in the only paper in this volume not arising from the conference, but deeply relevant to the broad theme of ethics in a crowded world. The authors examine the notion of motivation, which while recognised as an important influence on performance,

has been little discussed from an ethics perspective. Addressing content (intrinsic) theories and process (extrinsic) theories of motivation, they propose a conceptual model integrating these with MacIntyre's approach to virtue ethics. This model is grounded in the contention that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation should be employed to achieve the best organisational outcomes – where intrinsic motivation reflects an individual's desire to do, be or achieve something, while extrinsic motivation drives behaviour through connection with an external outcome. Drawing on MacIntyre, Naeem and Syed point to the parallel development of excellence (achieved through practice and in relationship) and success (achieved through institutions and linked with extrinsic motivation), and the need for organisations to balance these. They present five propositions to support their model, which argues that while extrinsic motivation leads to success (in the institutional sense), the practice of virtues over time is strengthened by intrinsic motivation to convert this success to excellence. The authors challenge organisations therefore to achieve greater balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and to better recognise the role of virtue in employee motivation.

CONCLUSION

It is easy to fall into clichés when discussing globalisation and its impact on people's lives. A shrinking world, a global village, increased tribalism, uncertainty and change – these are the stereotypes of globalisation, simplifying the complex and often confronting realities of interconnectedness that characterise contemporary lives.

In the face of fear, identity politics and border walls, ethics offers a framework for thinking carefully and constructively about the ripples of globalisation, and how they converge, diverge and create new patterns. As this volume shows, there are many ways of thinking and behaving ethically in relation to global crowdedness. These approaches truly reflect a praxis approach, seeking to transform the world through reflection and action. The diversity of the chapters demonstrates the many pathways to change both afforded and required in this crowded world.

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