

IPS FORUM CONTRIBUTIONS (ISSUE 1, VOL. 7)

Brand Aid and the International Political Economy and Sociology of North–South Relations

Introduction

LISA ANN RICHEY

Roskilde University

AND

STEFANO PONTE

Copenhagen Business School

This forum brings together a diverse group of scholars from international relations, international political economy, sociology, geography, and development studies to explore “Brand Aid”—a new concept in studies of North–South relations that can be advanced by IPE/IPS scholarship. In Brand Aid, branded products are sold to “ethical” consumer/citizens through celebrities who link them to worthy causes in developing countries. Brand Aid is “aid to brands” because it helps sell products and improve a brand’s ethical profile and value. It is also “brands that provide aid” because a proportion of the profit or sales is devoted to helping “distant others.” Brand Aid reconfigures images and representations of the legitimate role of business, civil society, and the state (and their overlaps) in North–South relations in ways that are not easily situated between “exploitation” and “development.”

The contributions collected here stem from a series of roundtables organized in 2011 (including one at the International Studies Association annual convention in Montreal) to discuss how “we” in the North engage to “help” people in the South beyond the traditional international aid and trade channels (see contribution by Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte). The roundtable discussions developed into examinations of the broader aspects of contemporary North–South relations around gender and security, the morality of health, the changing role of the global South, corporate practices and social responsibility, biopolitics, celebrities as global social actors, and mediating material cultures across distance. These areas could be usefully informed by contemporary IPE/IPS scholarship, but are not yet part of mainstream debates.

Five of these points of engagement are highlighted by the contributions in this Forum. First, visual representations are a key feature of Brand Aid. By mediating

materiality and discourses, they reshape inclusion–exclusion paradigms, securitizing and de-gendering bodies along the way (see Lene Hansen’s contribution). Second, North–South relations are not only shaped by the “hard core” operations of business, but also by the way corporations manage their ethical profile and their brands—for example, through corporate social responsibility initiatives that may target helping distant others. Currently, targeting global health and especially HIV-AIDS has become attractive to business. Health then becomes a “super-value” legitimating device that makes it easier to mask the possible damage inflicted by corporate operations on workers or the environment (see contributions by Samantha King and by Susan Craddock). Third, “doing good” for distant others, and “being cool” for one’s peers (for both consumers and corporations), is becoming part of defining a new neoliberal “modernity.” This branding of “lives saved” is an important part of the creation of the Northern self (see contribution by Michael Goodman) and is premised upon the exclusion of much of the social and economic change actually happening in the South (see Jane Parpart’s contribution). Fourth, celebrities are increasingly active in mediating North–South relations via their management of affect to shape not just what we in the North think about the global South, but how we do so through consumption (see contributions by Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte and by Michael Goodman).

Fifth, new modalities of legitimating “good” relationships between North and South (such as “sustainable,” “fair” and “ecological” labels and certifications) are having a number of unexpected instrumental effects. They can simultaneously protect brand value and corporate profits and also make brands susceptible to “shame or acclaim” campaigns by activist NGOs. Even though Brand Aid relationships naturalize and legitimate North–South inequalities, they also deliver modest benefits that might not otherwise occur (see contribution by Dan Klooster). Finally, the conclusion theorizes how the contributions to this forum go beyond the “political” in IPE and the ideology of pragmatism, and begins formulating a global IPS that covers the diversity of the postcolonial context (see Stefano Guzzini’s contribution). It also argues that scholars need to meaningfully incorporate ethics in approaching “the sociopolitical” in North–South relations. *Brand Aid*, and the contributions to this forum, in Guzzini’s words, “combine a micro-view of the culture of capitalism in different local settings with a vertical link in terms of the value-chains within which those corporations and international organizations organize this ‘good-doing.’” Thus, one of the key contributions of this Forum is in bringing discussions of consumerism, global capitalism, and international political economy to International Political Sociology.

Shopping and Insecurity: Visualizing the Aid/Other Nexus

LENE HANSEN

University of Copenhagen

That the phenomenon of Brand Aid—that is, the “combined meaning of ‘aid to brands’ and ‘brands that provide aid’” (Richey and Ponte 2011:10)—sits firmly at the intersection of international political economy, global health-care policies, and marketing, is powerfully brought out by Lisa Richey and Stefano Ponte in

their important book, *Brand Aid: Shopping Well to Save the World*, as well as by the other contributions to this Forum. One idea that the book does not pursue, however, is how Brand Aid, as embodied by and enacted through Product Red (RED), speaks to political and academic debates over the securitization of HIV/AIDS (Elbe 2006). Thus, this contribution is concerned with the way in which RED raises—but also evades—questions of international, human and gendered insecurity. Considering the extensive securitization of HIV/AIDS by politicians, international organizations, and the media, within the North as well as the South, the absence of RED branding is striking. As Richey and Ponte's work shows, RED is situated on a political and discursive terrain cognizant of HIV/AIDS's securitization, but it refrains from both "security speech acts" that authoritatively declare HIV/AIDS to be a threat to "Africa," and the familiar stable of images depicting suffering, dying, AIDS-afflicted women and children (Bleiker and Kay 2007).

Yet, viewed through the lens of security, RED invokes a remarkable ambiguity. The gratification promised the shopper/savior hinges on a securitization logic, because if combating HIV/AIDS is not an urgent issue warranting our response/money, why choose RED over other cool and sexy products? This securitization is "immanent" insofar as it is not explicitly verbalized or depicted within the campaign itself, yet the latter draws upon and speaks to the constitution of HIV/AIDS as a security issue in the wider public sphere. By avoiding the discursive and visual rhetoric of threats and dangers, RED conjures a world where no radical Others exist. Here, there are no women raped by HIV/AIDS-afflicted soldiers, no governments denying the spread of the disease, and no travel bans keeping people with HIV/AIDS on the outside. In "RED's explicit emphasis on women and children" (Richey and Ponte 2011:56), there are just good Western Selves helping good Africans to survive (as Jane L. Parpart argues in her contribution to this forum, the class structures within the North, South, and West are in fact more complicated). This might at first glance seem like a desirable avoidance of the demonization and phobic images that have haunted HIV/AIDS since its discovery (Crimp in Takemoto 2003). It might also, more specifically, help rectify what Parpart and Thompson (2011) have identified as the political and academic neglect of gendered insecurity in Africa. Ultimately, and unfortunately, the (gendered) insecurity that RED introduces is, however, a decidedly "thin" one which passes over the political processes through which insecurity is produced.

This is perhaps most apparent in RED's visualization of Africans with HIV/AIDS. A, if not the, pivotal set of images (photographs and video) document *The Lazarus Effect*, that is, RED's central claim that two pills of antiretroviral treatment a day can bring dying victims back to life (Richey and Ponte 2011:72-75). The "before" and "after" images constitute the RED shopper as the transformative agent bringing security to untreated Africans, a powerful reversal of the inevitable deterioration documented by photographers such as Nicholas Nixon during the first decade of the epidemic (Takemoto 2003). As Richey and Ponte point out, there is virtually no spatial or temporal grounding in RED's images of *The Lazarus Effect* except for signs of heterosexual family life. There are no bodily interactions except ostensibly heterosexual monogamy, no exchanges of sexual services, rapes, no promiscuous or homosexual male sex. If one did not know that HIV/AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease, one might easily think it genetic or random. Nor is there any institutional agency or responsibility (for a further discussion of the constitution of personal responsibility for health, see Samantha King's contribution to this Forum). In sum, the complicated political, cultural, and social processes through which HIV/AIDS is contracted and spread become narrowed down to the prevention of transmission from mother to child.

But the depoliticized, static rendering of HIV/AIDS that RED conjures cannot be kept entirely at bay. This is not only because *The Lazarus Effect* can become a double-edged sword—as the end of shopping causes the video to reverse, leading those just resurrected back to their graves—but also because the tranquil hetero-normative domesticity invoked by the RED campaigns is destabilized by an ambiguity as to who it is who must be rescued. Richey and Ponte rightly note that “women and children” are heavily emphasized, but they are not entirely alone. *The Lazarus Effect* video features two men and two women, and a prominent photograph promoting the RED American Express card shows supermodel Gisele Bündchen joyfully leaning her head against Masai nomad Keseme Ole Parsapaet. The texts assigned to each—“my card” to Bündchen, “my life” to Parsapaet—suggest the latter’s HIV-positive status (the affective significance of celebrities promoting “worthy causes” such as RED is highlighted in Lisa Richey and Stefano Ponte’s contribution to this Forum). The male subject, lurking ambiguously at the margin, could, if fully included, expand the mission and gratification accomplished by RED: not only are African women and children saved, so is “Africa” as such. However, such an inclusion risks unraveling the depoliticized space that RED so labors to establish, raising complicated issues of agency, power, sexuality, and gender within “Africa” and in North–South relations.

Three strategies help secure the marginal status of the African male subject. First, while men are included, the textual and visual emphasis is on women and children. Second, when men do appear, they are accompanied by women (wives, mothers, supermodels) or they are alone; they are not accompanied by other men, nor are either men or women shown as educated, urban, or working, in other words, subject positions normally associated with hegemonic masculinity. Third, gender is erased or collapsed in some of the most prominently displayed depictions. Parsapaet and Bündchen are of the same height, their poses and body shapes almost identical. Bündchen’s hair marks her as female, but nothing clearly identifies Parsapaet as male and their contact is friendly-girly rather than erotic. A blackened Kate Moss on *The (RED) Independent* cover has had not just her natural skin tone, but also her breasts, removed.

The de-gendering of HIV/AIDS in RED’s visual branding resonates with a wider erasure of the disease’s history. RED effectively locates HIV/AIDS in Africa, displacing it both spatially from other continents, including North America and Europe, and temporally from a past where sexualized securitizations and activism featured prominently. The problem here is not only that of amnesia as such, but that connections and alliances between North and South become invisible. For activists as well as critical scholars, particularly those who did not take part in the battles and debates of the last millennium, spatially and temporally displacing HIV/AIDS to Africa risks missing points of convergence, for instance over how those afflicted by HIV/AIDS are depicted with agency rather than, in Douglas Crimp’s words, “as images of abjection and otherness” (Takemoto 2003:84). Erasing the past also casts HIV/AIDS as a security problem that originates and lives within the South, rather than one that implicates the North.

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Philanthrocapitalism and the Healthification of Everything

SAMANTHA KING

Queen's University

In 2012, it is hard to find a philanthrocapitalist campaign that does not trade in the language of “health.” Sometimes the health cause is defined specifically, as with Bono’s RED initiative designed to provide antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) for people living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa (Richey and Ponte 2011), and sometimes the cause is defined vaguely, as in the “Healthy Communities Program” operated by the World Cocoa Foundation, an industry group for cocoa growers.¹ Regardless of how health is mobilized, it is assumed to be an unambiguous and universal good, hence its appeal to corporations, mega-rich donors, and their nonprofit and governmental partners. But as Jonathan M. Metzler writes in an essay titled “Why Against Health?,” “‘health’ is a term replete with value judgments, hierarchies, and blind assumptions that speak as much about power and privilege as they do about wellbeing. Health is a desired state, but it is also a prescribed state and an ideological position” (Metzler 2010:2). Health must therefore be treated with caution and the political, economic, and social agendas to which it becomes harnessed carefully scrutinized.

This is no easy task, for as health has become increasingly moralized, its remit has also expanded. Thus, as I was reading Richey and Ponte’s (2011) provocative account of the RED campaign, I found myself contemplating the extent to which the affective appeal of compassionate consumption is linked to what Robert Crawford (2006) refers to as the emergence of health as a “supervalue”; that is, a lens through which a variety of other values—discipline, civic responsibility, family—are filtered. Crawford argues that in the context of neoliberal ideology, “personal responsibility for health is widely considered the sine qua non of individual autonomy and good citizenship” (Crawford 2006:402). Of key importance here is Crawford’s suggestion that the “new health consciousness” that gained ascendancy in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s was not simply reflective of the emergence of neoliberalism, but in fact played a decisive role in the formation of this mode of organizing political and economic life (Crawford 2006:407). A widespread awakening to environmental dangers and the effects of smoking were particularly important in producing concerns about “lifestyle” hazards, “risk behaviors,” and personal responsibility for health. So although governments and corporations with political and economic stakes in a turn away from collectivism and regulation mobilized ideologies of individual responsibility to encourage “healthy lifestyles” (Ingham 1985; Petersen 1997), these ideologies

¹Available at http://www.worldcocoafoundation.org/who-w-are/general-press-releases/wcf_pr-06-10-4.asp.

also grew out of middle-class beliefs in the body as a route to personal renewal and a secure future. Crawford writes, "What has become clear in hindsight is that individual responsibility for health, although not without challenge, proved to be particularly effective in establishing the 'common sense' of neoliberalism's essential tenets" (Crawford 2006:410).

Americanized notions of individual responsibility are inherently complex and contradictory and become especially knotty when they intersect with philanthropic discourses or move through different geopolitical contexts. Some of the multiple and unpredictable ways in which health as an agenda-setting mechanism operates in the everyday lives of people caught up in the philanthrocapitalist/global health nexus can be gleaned from the work of scholars such as Adams and Pigg (2005), Nguyen (2010), and Biehl (2007). My focus here, though, is on the pedagogical implications of health for individuals and institutions enjoined to save distant and suffering strangers—the primary audience, after all, for corporatized do-gooding. Proper citizenship in compassionate consumer culture involves taking care of one's self and of others, though the latter preferably occurs through voluntary, private giving, not taxation. While those "others" might sometimes be understood to hold responsibility for their plight, and sometimes not (in the case of HIV in Africa, victim-blaming discourses operate in tandem with discourses of passive helplessness), the precise images used to encourage consumer-citizens to shop and thereby donate must be represented in a manner that has broad appeal. With respect to philanthrocapitalist projects such as RED, longstanding fantasies of a "categorical 'Africa,'" to use James Ferguson's phrase (2006:7), have shaped the development of corporate social responsibility initiatives and what is imagined to be possible in terms of economic and political change on the continent. But what is the particular commonsense that health as a discourse establishes in its philanthrocapitalist guise? What does health make seem possible and what imaginings does it conceal?

Whether health is mobilized in overly narrow (usually biomedical) or overly general (usually social) ways, grand claims are consistently made on its behalf: "Latest stats:" reads www.joinred.com, "900 babies are born every day with HIV." Such interventions, favored by the likes of Bono and Bill and Melinda Gates, are presented as simple and straightforward solutions to complex problems—no questions asked. These models focus on getting pills into bodies with little heed paid to the need to transform the economic and social contexts out of which the disease arises. Instead health, which is defined by access to drugs, is presented as a solution to all ills including poverty, various forms of inequality, inadequate public services, and so on. The business and trade practices of McDonalds, Coca-Cola, Johnson and Johnson, Monsanto, and other junk food, pharmaceutical, and agribusiness interests in which organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation hold massive amounts of stock in turn evade scrutiny and their business proceeds as usual, regardless of its effects on well-being (Stuckler, Basu and McKee 2011).

Overly general models likewise present health as an all-encompassing panacea. The sport-based Millennium Development Goals created by the United Nations, for example, claim that participation in physical education and activity can help "achieve universal primary education," "reduce child mortality," and "combat HIV/AIDS."² Precisely how these transformations will unfold remains unclear, but the underlying message is that if *we* just get *them* moving, anything is possible. Further implied within this logic is the assumption that even if access to sport does not ultimately lead to the end of the AIDS epidemic, it will have instilled some important moral lessons about self-responsibility and discipline along the way.

²Available at http://www.un.org/sport2005/a_year/mill_goals.html. (Accessed December 7, 2012.)

Health is not innately good; nor is it innately bad. Rather, the point here is that health is mutable and we must be alert to the diversity of ideological positions it advances and the economic and social structures it entrenches. Health cannot be transported, *in toto*, from one context to another. Nor can it be accomplished simply by selling more stuff, by getting pills into bodies, or by adopting the healthiest of healthy lifestyles. The longer we cling to the idea that it can, the harder it will be to find alternatives to philanthrocapitalism and other noxious forces that operate through the guise of health.

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Aid for Whom? Distance Caring and Corporate Practices

SUSAN CRADDOCK

University of Minnesota

Making the world a better place through simple acts of consumption is a very appealing prospect. It is not surprising that campaigns such as “buy pink” to help curb breast cancer, or the RED campaign to stem AIDS, have taken hold in the United States and beyond. If buying a red toaster oven helps a woman somewhere in Africa get the antiretrovirals (ARVs) she needs, is that not a win-win arrangement? Unfortunately, corporate campaigns—such as the Bono-endorsed RED campaign to channel antiretroviral drugs to those living with AIDS in high-burden countries in Africa through proceeds from product sales—work to obfuscate corporate practices more than they solve global health problems.

Unlike some consumer-driven causes such as fair-trade coffee, the RED campaign addresses nothing about the social relations of production behind, or environmental impact of, consuming particular products (Richey and Ponte 2011). So, while those buying products from participating companies might feel good that profits, however vaguely specified, are going toward buying ARVs, this humanitarian act is contravened by the fact that the majority of multinational corporations today participate to varying degrees in offshoring their manufacturing and assembly operations. They do so because they are able to cut costs—and increase profits—through low wages, lax environmental regulations, and draconian working conditions such as enforced and unpaid overtime, no vacation leave or insurance coverage.

Why is this relevant? Because buying a RED product is, of course, not just about contributing a percentage of the cost toward AIDS drugs, it also endorses and perpetuates the relations of production involved in producing that product. In other words, the act of purchasing a product on the market is the final outcome of, a tacit commitment to, and a re-galvanization of, a series of production policies and practices which might detrimentally affect thousands of lives across numerous countries. Put another way, feeling good about buying RED commodities obfuscates the fact that the conditions under which many if not most commodities are produced today keeps workers at levels of poverty such that should they have AIDS they would be at the mercy of free ARVs such as the RED campaign supports—but only if they live in particular countries in Africa—because they would not be able to purchase even the cheapest generic regimens on their wage levels. Long hours, stress, suboptimal working conditions, and the often short-term nature of many assembly jobs also increase vulnerability to diseases including, potentially, HIV/AIDS.

A brief example of this would be the corporation Target. Though not a participant in the RED campaign, Target dedicates 5% of its profits toward charities and is now one of the biggest sponsors of the annual AIDS Walk in my home city of Minneapolis. It has a huge presence at these annual events, posting the widely recognized red Target symbols at regular intervals throughout the course (replacing red AIDS ribbons), providing Target t-shirts and red bags, and generally evidencing its corporate commitment to stopping the spread of AIDS through aid. Yet, as Alex Urquhart has shown (Urquhart and Craddock 2010), Target ensures that its own workers in and outside of the United States cannot afford ARVs through strident anti-unionism, low wages, and punitive offshore manufacturing practices. At the same time, it opaquely contributes to HIV both through funding right-wing and anti-gay politicians committed to abstinence-only education programs which consistently fail to work and—to paraphrase Urquhart—through a dedication to poverty as part of the violence of profit.

The RED campaign does not just mask the relations of participating commodities production, however. It also makes no demand on the conditions of its philanthropy, namely pharmaceutical industry practices that include tireless efforts to prevent the generic production of newer antiretrovirals. To give an example, as of 2005, India has had to recognize patents on new ARVs under the terms of the WTO's Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property, or TRIPS. TRIPS enforces US-style intellectual property regimes globally, including the requirement that all WTO member countries recognize patents on pharmaceutical products. It is widely recognized that it was propelled by European Union- and United States-based pharmaceutical industries wanting to maximize their growth prospects through expanded markets (Heywood 2002). Soon after TRIPS was enforced in India, organizations such as MSF³ signaled their fear that affordable generic ARVs would be threatened, given that the vast majority of donated

³Available at www.msfastcess.org. (Accessed October 29, 2012.)

generic ARVs used in Africa—up to 87%—are manufactured by Indian pharmaceutical companies. Under the terms of TRIPS, India can continue to manufacture AIDS drugs patented before 2005, but not after (Médecins Sans Frontières Access to Medicines Campaign).

Yet the European Union is now attempting to enforce application of measures that would go beyond TRIPS stipulations and further constrain Indian pharmaceutical companies' ability to produce generic ARVs. What the European Union wants—as pushed by European pharmaceutical companies—are measures such as “data exclusivity” (Ahuja 2011; Keenan 2011). Right now, in order to gain regulatory approval, Indian pharmaceutical companies only need to prove that their generic drugs are equivalent to the original drugs, which entails among other things referral to safety data generated by the producer of the patented drug. Regulators use this data in evaluating approval decisions on the original (patented) drug as well as their generic equivalents. Data exclusivity would prevent generic manufacturers from referring to this data for up to ten years, thus pushing back the production of generic versions of new antiretrovirals by a decade. Consistently producing affordable new antiretrovirals, however, is critical given the rapid rate of mutation of HIV and the frequent necessity to change drug regimens for those developing resistance to initial, or first-line, drugs.

The European Union's actions are being driven, in part, by the impending decline of the huge profits still earned by major pharmaceutical companies on the sale of AIDS drugs in the United States, France, Japan, Germany, Spain, Italy, and the UK—the biggest markets for these drugs among high-income countries and markets that earned the industry a total of \$11.8bn in 2010 (Kumar 2010). The decline will happen particularly after 2013 when patents run out on some of the current highest-profit ARVs; these are unlikely to be replaced by new ARVs.

If the European Union succeeds in pushing through this measure, it will make it very difficult for those in low-income countries to access newer drug regimens, a frequent necessity given the rapid mutation rate of HIV. The Global Fund—one of the primary global organizations buying and disseminating ARVs—cannot purchase what is not available. And while no single entity can persuade powerful state conglomerates and industries to alter their position, greater exposure could have positive effects—exposure by people such as Bono, the force behind the RED campaign.

It is compelling, and certainly convenient, to think that we might help people on the other side of the world stay alive by the simple act of shopping. It is compelling, but as with so much “causerism,” it helps less than we might hope, and hides more than it illuminates about the problem it is supposed to be mitigating. Buying red might result in providing a comparatively small number of antiretrovirals to individuals in need of them. Yet it also aids corporations in continuing deleterious practices while at the same time hiding behind superficial acts of corporate social responsibility. Who is aided most in the end? Alas and as usual, not those living with AIDS, impoverishment, and uncertainty.

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Rethinking “Brand Aid” in an Increasingly Unequal, Unstable, and Global World

JANE L. PARPART

University of Massachusetts Boston

Richey and Ponte (2011) explore the dark side of corporate social responsibility as practiced by the RED campaign. The campaign was launched in the 1990s to celebrate the possibility of doing good and helping impoverished, diseased Others in the South, while consuming products produced by its members including Starbucks, American Express, Emporio Armani, Converse, Gap, Apple, and Motorola. Buttressed by the power of celebrities such as Bono, Oprah, and Angelina Jolie, as well as development experts/celebrities such as Paul Farmer and Jeffrey Sachs, the RED campaign has provided Northern consumers with a rationale for feeling good while purchasing expensive lattes, sneakers, clothing, and computers. As the (RED) Manifesto claims, if you buy RED products, you will also support the efforts of “good, socially conscious companies” to save helpless, diseased Africans from dying of AIDS. The RED campaign thus not only provides a rationale for conscientious shopping, it also dramatizes the gap between the “rich” North and the impoverished, diseased bodies of the global South, and reinforces the neoliberal claim that unfettered but responsible capitalism is the key to solving the problems of the poverty-stricken global South.

Brand Aid raises important questions about corporate social responsibility and the power of brands to influence consumer decisions and legitimate “business-friendly” governance. Yet the book’s analysis is constrained by its focus on Northern capital, consumers, and celebrities. This is particularly problematic given the dramatic shifts in the global political economy over the last 20 years. In fact, the Northern middle-class consumers targeted by the RED campaign are increasingly endangered (see Arianna Huffington’s *Third World America* (2010)). The strongest markets for luxury goods are in the emerging economies of the global South, particularly the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). Indeed, these markets are being targeted by Northern producers of luxury goods, and both production and sales are increasingly based in these regions. Even the beleaguered poster child for global poverty—the diseased, poverty-ridden African continent—currently includes some of the fastest growing economies in the world, with elites eagerly snapping up Western luxury goods symbolizing modernity, success, and power.

Yet the RED campaign never mentions this aspect of the global South. The RED companies do not promise to eliminate poverty in Asia—they focus on the vulnerable black bodies of Africa. Given the current economic climate in the North, it is not surprising that the RED campaign’s promise that consumers will feel good (and superior) if they purchase goods designed to help the diseased African Other is particularly attractive to members of the struggling middle classes in the global North. While few middle-class folks buy Armani, many can afford a latte, a pair of sneakers, a cell phone, and greeting cards. Thus, many RED

goods are affordable to middle-class families, even if only as special treats and presents. Yet do we know whether consumers are buying luxury goods easily, seeing charity as an expected social practice? That would seem more likely for the wealthier upper-middle- and upper-class consumers. What about the struggling middle classes, and even the working class and the poor? Does an ethical consumption choice that promises feel-good notions of superiority over distant impoverished Others provide a much-needed boost? More in-depth research into these questions is required if we are going to unpack the broad arguments of *Brand Aid* and produce more nuanced, complex analyses of the forces driving Northern consumer decisions.

At the same time, we need to know more about consumers in the global South, particularly the BRICS. Are they purchasing goods from RED producers in order to feel responsible? Do they gain from feeling better than the impoverished, diseased African bodies the RED campaign promises to help? Could consumption be more about proving one's position in a global middle-class elite rather than an effort to maintain distance from the poor? Again, more ethnographic research is needed. We need to know more about the rising middle class in the global South. Are their hopes and dreams attached to certain products, particularly those that are widely accepted markers of middle-class status? Do the ethics of obtaining those markers matter?

Brand Aid's focus on Northern capitalism and its neoliberal agenda would also benefit from more attention to both various capitalisms and consumer practices in the global South. In India, for example, a major multinational, Tata Corporation, is organized around a core unit responsible for the company's social welfare policies. Indeed, Tata played a major part in the construction of the Bangalore Institute of Technology and continues to influence government policy on technology and social welfare. Is this a model that already incorporates notions of social responsibility in ways that would make a RED campaign redundant? How would a RED campaign work with state-led capitalism (with private partnerships) such as those emerging in China? Are state-owned enterprises (SOEs) less apt to worry about being seen as socially responsible given that they are embedded in state structures with bureaucracies at least supposed to be dedicated to dealing with social problems? Do consumers in such environments already view capital as more benign and so are they less apt to be drawn to the promise of feeling good about their consumption patterns? What role do celebrities play in branding such corporations as socially responsible? Would such branding make a difference to corporations in the global South? These are questions that need to be asked if *Brand Aid* is to carry its analysis into the global political economy. Such an approach will require in-depth case studies that can probe both apparent and deeper feelings about consumption, identities, and social responsibility in an increasingly unequal world, particularly for those aspiring to middle-class status under highly competitive conditions—in the North and South.

Brand Aid's analysis of capitalism in the global North provides important insights into the global political economy, the lure that "shopping well to save the world" has for middle-class consumers in the North, and the power of positive branding for corporations vulnerable to accusations of greed and mistreatment of workers. Yet, as I have argued, consumers and *capitalisms* in the global South also need to be incorporated into the analysis. Only then will we begin to understand branding, corporate practices, and consumer desires and behavior on a global level. Given the fluid and uncertain world we inhabit, the questions raised by *Brand Aid* also require further, globally informed research. Hopefully, along the way, researchers may also discover that some people believe that less consumption, greater simplicity, and broader empathy may be the best way to preserve our planet and ensure a sustainable, more equitable world (Ramo 2009).

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iCare Capitalism? The Biopolitics of Choice in a Neoliberal Economy of Hope

MICHAEL K. GOODMAN

King's College London

International relations and global development just got a whole lot easier. Through the conscious choice and purchase of the “right” kind of coffee, bottled water, or t-shirt, now available at one’s local supermarket, the caring relationalities of development of the “fair trade” kind can quite easily be put into practice. For some, these practices provide the space for people’s “everyday” moralities let loose through their ordinary choices that then works to globalize a form of responsibility toward poor Others (Barnett, Cloke, Clarke and Malpass 2011). Here, the weekly grocery shopping has morphed into the first line of defense of poor farmers’ livelihoods, clean water, women’s empowerment, and international development. With Brand Aid (Richey and Ponte 2011), with its celebrity- and corporate-brand-drenched marketing campaigns, this “causumerism” has been taken to the extreme. Now, through the purchase of Product (RED)-labeled commodities, it is instead the *very real case* that saving the *very lives* of poor, Aids-stricken Africans just got a whole lot easier. Put in rather stark, and exceedingly un-ironic and unproblematic terms, in buying a Product (RED) iPod, “you have a new iPod and you helped save a person’s life.” Over time, however, the Product (RED) campaign has morphed slightly and narrowed the advertised scope of whom it saves. Now, RED provides its drugs predominantly to pregnant HIV-infected mothers in Africa in order to halt the spread of HIV to newborn children designed to usher in an “Aids-free generation” by 2015 (Joinred.org 2012). Thus, in the contemporary incarnation of Product (RED), “a person’s life” has taken on more specific meanings and materialities in the even more stable forms of pregnant mothers and children, while the mechanisms of how they are “saved” have remained the same.

Consumer choice, as the key mechanism of Brand Aid and its articulations in Product (RED), is literally and figuratively entangled in the biopolitics of the existence and “being” of African HIV victims; AIDS or no AIDS is merely a matter of choice at the till. Brand Aid is therefore a biopolitics of life (and death) itself (cf. Rose 2001), on sale just like any other commodity, but conspicuously signaled as RED through the use of the color red either on the product or on its marketing materials. These are a particular form of biopolitics that enact and are enacted by what Rose (2001:18) calls an “ethopolitics” that are “... the self-techniques by which human being should judge themselves and act upon themselves to make themselves better than they are.” In Brand Aid, the care of the

self through the conspicuous consumption of luxury goods is ingeniously associated with the biopoliticized care of the dying African Other, salvaged through these discrete acts of consumption and discerning self-care. Here then is a relational ethopolitics of the self that can really only be operationalized through discrete connections to disembodied (RED) products, caring corporations, compassionate neoliberalized capitalisms, and poor, HIV-infected African mothers and children; completely absent are the histories and socioeconomic structures that worked to construct these contemporary connections in the first place.

Stitching together, Brand Aid's landscapes of hope are congeries of celebrities and their now requisite global humanitarianisms (Littler 2008). Besides the ironies of the fabulously rich and famous working to "sell" African health and well-being, celebrities are even more broadly in the business of deciding how and in what ways we should care about Others, as well as how we should do development these days. Through campaigns, charities and endorsements, "... it is now through the globally-recognized, mega-star that the subaltern speaks" (Goodman 2010:105). Thus, celebrities have quickly become elevated voices that work to define for us the problems and solutions to global poverty and humanitarian crises (see also, Fridell and Konings Forthcoming). These are a biopolitics of development for a spectacularized media age.

Yet, much more is going on here as the Gates Foundation and other celebrity-fronted foundations (for example, Pitt-Jolie) are beginning to show in terms of their elevated power to dictate development trajectories. Indeed, in a tantalizing and potentially very far-reaching argument that needs to be followed up, Richey and Ponte (2011:159) put it this way: "The celebrity substitutes the state as the external guarantor of welfare, a new form of the social contract that underpins Brand Aid." In this, we can see the rise of what I have elsewhere called "celebrity governance regimes" (Goodman Forthcoming) which, with their own internal media and cultural- and political-economic dynamics, work to mediate our affects, but also the processes by which these affects are bounded and materialized in Africa (and elsewhere), as Brand Aid shows in stark relief. And before those ever accompanying choruses of "at least they (that is, so-called caring celebrities and corporations) are doing something" become even louder, our job is surely, first and foremost, to be doggedly engaged with, and critical about, what that "something" is, where it has come from, how it is done, and what its impacts are.

In some ways, it is not very far off the mark to say that Brand Aid is the absolute apex, if not the pure essence, of consumerist, neoliberal capitalism: shopping, consumption, and choosing determine the very existence of human-being-ness in the form of HIV-infected Africans. Can shopping get any more meaningful than this? Can choice become embedded with more power than this? Can consuming get any more "real," material, impactful, and "care-full" (McEwan and Goodman 2010) than this? Or perhaps it is better to suggest that Brand Aid is at the apex of some very uncomfortable ethical and moral "boundary crossing"—what Bono, nonetheless labels as "hard commerce" that is "punk rock, hip hop" rather than "hippy music, holding hands" (Richey and Ponte 2011:149)—through these explicit connections of shopping and the existence of Others through the branded commodification of their well-being? It is in making these transgressions and, indeed, making them work quite well, that Brand Aid problematically normalizes an already powerfully extant cultural politics of capitalism in its love affair with "freedom of choice" and its overt penchant for the marketization of literally everything. In Brand Aid, then, the politics of the possible are much further and more deeply colonized by market logics to the detriment of other forms of development.

These concerns beg two much larger questions: Does Brand Aid constitute a new, emergent and perhaps "sticky" form of neoliberalism on the variegated landscapes of neoliberalisms that, in practice, stalk the globe (Castree 2005; Harvey

2005)? If this is indeed the case, what does what might be called “iCare” capitalism—the overt creation of economic, brand, and self-value out of lives saved and death staved—mean for those engaged and (importantly) *not* engaged in these international development networks? These questions open up discussions very much worth having as the tides of international politics and global development continue to turn around the more prescient debates over what sort of world we want to live in. And, herein is where the intellectual and real-world power of current and future work on Brand Aid will find fertile and, indeed, spectacular ground.

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Brand Aid: Better than Nothing, Far from Enough

DAN KLOOSTER

University of Redlands

The act of buying is necessary to maintain a complex network of production which affects others’ bodies, societies, and environments (Hartwick 2000). As the book *Brand Aid* (Richey and Ponte 2011) so clearly shows, the links between a consumer and a commodity are complex and full of significance. The mundane act of applying certain labels to a commodity brings into play complicated questions about the implications of its production and consumption. Potentially, labels such as RED allow people to understand something important about their participation in a network linking far-flung groups of people, trans-national corporations, nation-states, and nature. Like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) scheme for certifying forest products, RED also involves outside legitimators such as celebrities and NGOs. A little bit like Fair Trade, it promises a transfer of value by guaranteeing a charity-like contribution linked to a purchase. But unlike

these exemplary labels, it makes no attempt to tell a story about the way a RED product is produced, much less affect that process of production.

Richey and Ponte's book reveals how RED deflects the critical consumer's gaze. *Brand Aid* clarifies how RED obscures the social and environmental relations of production behind the goods sold under its umbrella. Nor does it question the distribution of power along a commodity chain. According to RED, markets are innocuous connectors between all-powerful ethical consumers and a fuzzy chain of producers and retailers who are almost innocent of agency. RED raises no questions about the global or corporate relationships behind the extraction of rent and profit. It provides HIV/AIDS drugs, but obscures the international political economy of the patent policies.

Nor does RED raise questions about consumer privilege or the power of corporations in networks of production. Only the consumer has agency in this implicit model of the world; AIDS victims are helpless recipients of aid. RED virtualizes the African HIV/AIDS sufferer, decontextualizes their suffering and the barriers they face in having more power over their health. RED does not invite the consumer to question the broader context of HIV/AIDS in Africa, such as structures and histories of poverty or the lack of adequate health-care systems. RED directs the consumer's gaze away from producers and the conditions of production, and toward decontextualized people in need of pills. But if that consumer was never going to gaze critically at production processes in the first place, so what? When the rock star Bono says death is more important than labor rights, he has a point (Richey and Ponte 2011:187).

In terms of uncovering and changing production processes, RED delivers little and certainly less than process-oriented labels such as FSC or Fair Trade. It delivers no changes in production process, no structural changes, little development of health-care institutions. Nevertheless, despite all of these rather depressing caveats, at least RED does *something*. In addition to profits for corporations and a stylish purchase for consumers, RED tells a simplistic story about an epidemic of human suffering which has some kind of link to a purchase. And RED delivers pills for AIDS victims. There is much to critique about this mechanism, but in doing so, academics risk making the perfect the enemy of the good. The substantial failures of this mechanism to promote deeper change do not negate its positive impacts in the lives of some sick people for some period of time.

Furthermore, labels can also make brands vulnerable to activists' continued leverage. RED improves a company's value and reputation through the double capitalization of increased sales and profits and via improved brand image, without necessarily challenging any of its actual operations and practices (Richey and Ponte 2011). As Michael Conroy's book *Branded* (2007) shows, however, this can cut both ways. Labels can provide activist NGOs with leverage in their attempts to influence practices of corporate social responsibility and to change corporate behavior. Perhaps the attention to corporate philanthropic practices arising from RED will allow activists to pressure companies to do more.

This hope, it should be noted, implies a fundamental critique of RED and other forms of Brand Aid as a social change strategy; significant change requires social movements. Tweaking the market does not challenge the structures producing poverty and AIDS; this requires some kind of broader social movement beyond the action of individual consumers. The question, then, is whether labels such as RED can play the necessary role in broader social movements.

Maybe the answer depends on what people learn from labels like RED. Richey and Ponte (2011) argue that RED actually reinforces commodity fetishism—the idea that the value of a commodity inheres in the commodity and that makes invisible the relationships between the people, nature, trans-national corporations, nation-states, workers, and owners which produced it. Richey and Ponte show how online calculators invite people to calculate lives saved with their

purchase, and this becomes part of the brand value of RED companies! In this way, RED reinforces the perceived separation of the commodities it labels from association with the relationships which produced it.

I would argue that it also destabilizes commodity fetishism. RED implicitly admits that commodities have connection to lives lived and lives lost. RED and other forms of Brand Aid invite people to care about others, and this is fundamentally different than consumption which invites people only to care about themselves. In the absence of labels such as Fair Trade, FSC, and even RED, people are invited to consummate a network of production in utter ignorance that those networks exist or have any implications whatsoever.

Some story is better than no story. RED gives people a fuzzy and distorted view of the social relationships behind the things they buy, but at least it suggests that there is something there to look at. Compared to a system in which the surface of the commodity is all that seems to exist, labels such as RED are an improvement. As Richey and Ponte tell us, even fashion business magazine recognizes that “shopping is politics” (Richey and Ponte 2011:24). A label such as RED communicates this idea, even if it does so in ways which do as little as possible to destabilize the systems in which our shopping helps produce a political economy.

In other words, although RED and other forms of Brand Aid do not reveal the relationships of power behind a globalized system of production and exchange, they suggest that there is *something* beneath the stylish and well-priced surface of a commodity. It breaks down the perception that the things people buy are innocent of global economic structures. By informing, inspiring, and empowering social movements, that could be a small step on the path to transforming the networks of production that affect others’ bodies, societies, and environments.

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Brand Aid: Values, Consumption, and Celebrity Mediation

LISA ANN RICHEY

Roskilde University

AND

STEFANO PONTE

Copenhagen Business School

What links a handmade necklace of paper beads with a pair of Emporio Armani (RED) sunglasses, or a pack of disposable diapers with a pink BMW luxury car? Belonging in the time of neoliberalism shapes our politics and our purchases. “Beads For Life” are “certified” by Martha Stewart as “eradicating poverty one

bead at a time.” The voice of Salma Hayek, famous Mexican-American actress, informs consumers that “one pack of Pampers=one lifesaving vaccine”; and the cast of the hit TV series “Friends” tours in support of BMW’s ultimate drive to raise money to fight breast cancer. All of these products are marketed through celebrities to consumer/citizens who want to shop for a better world. “Ethical” products are sold by marketing certain values. But as globalization shifts traditional boundaries of production and exchange, new understandings are needed about what constitutes a better product, a better world, or a more “ethical” consumer. In Richey and Ponte (2011), we developed the concept of “Brand Aid” to describe how branded products are sold as ethical items through celebrities who link them to worthy causes in developing countries.

In our contribution to this forum, we propose a new analytical framework for future work. Our model seeks to explore how causes, branded products, and celebrities manifest social values in diverse contexts of “helping.” We maintain points of meaning in local settings and culturally specific manifestations of capitalism while focusing on the global ordering that comes from branded ethical consumption across borders. This is based on the possible combinations of *causes, branded products, and celebrities* (see Figure 1) derived from the operationalization of three pillar concepts (values, consumption, and celebrity mediation).

1 When a celebrity is employed by a corporation to market its product but without a cause attached to it, we have “Marketing Campaigns using Celebrities” (MCCs)—most advertising campaigns using famous faces to sell products are in this category.

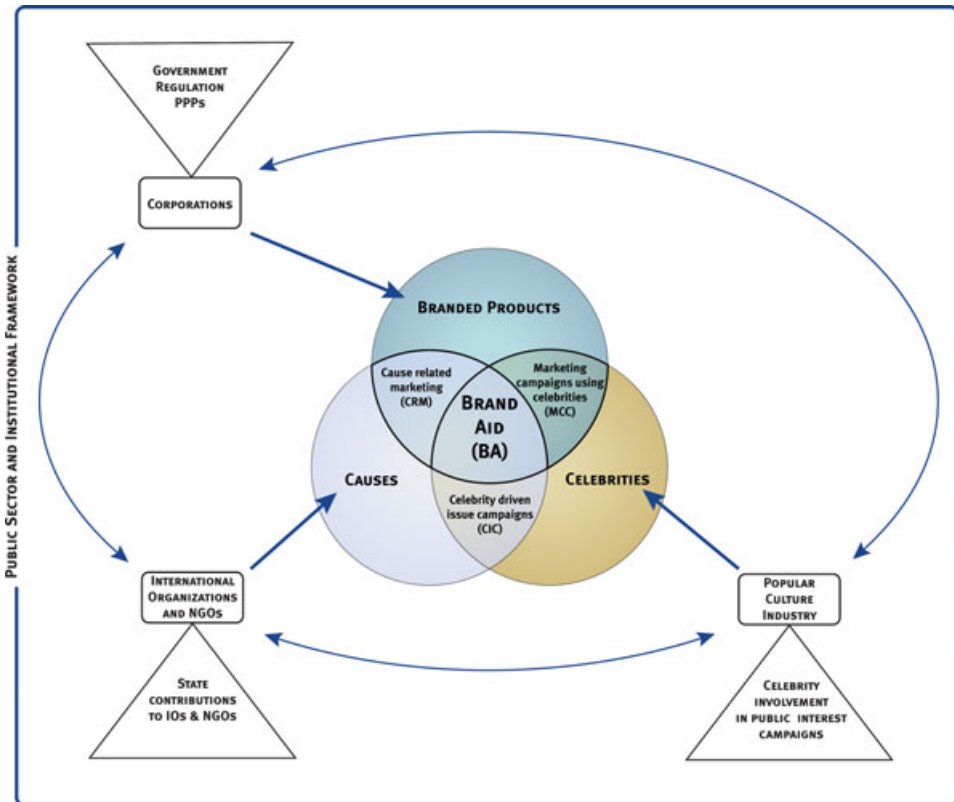


FIG 1. Brand Aid Conceptual Model

2 If a cause is mediated by a celebrity, but without being attached to a product, we have “Celebrity-driven Issue Campaigns” (CICs), such as George Clooney’s “Save Darfur.”

3 When a product is marketed together with a cause, but without the mediation function of celebrity, the resulting combination is what is known in business jargon as “Cause-Related Marketing” (CRM), such as buying Pink Ribbon products to support breast cancer research.

4 When celebrities unite with branded products and a cause, the resulting combination is “Brand Aid” (BA)—a concept we developed from work around the exemplary case study of Product (RED).

Ethical consumption is one of the fastest-growing trends in contemporary societies, as individuals find the marketplace provides a public opportunity for performing their personal values. The state-of-the-art understanding of ethical consumption rests on the core belief that reconnecting sites of consumption with those of production will enable a fairer distribution of value along supply chains, potentially driven by “fair trade” and “ethical consumption” purchases (cf. Miller 2001; Holtzer 2006; Clarke, Barnett, Cloke and Malpass 2007; Barnett, Cloke, Clarke and Malpass 2010; Goodman 2010). However, these perspectives fall short in their exclusive focus on the product itself as the location of “ethical” value.

Celebrity is a key component for our conceptual model for its role is signifying the communication of global causes specifically to local audiences of non-specialists. In many contemporary North–South initiatives, celebrities are not perceived as fundamentally inauthentic, and thus a detriment to overcome, but are actually the faces of doing good, credibility, and believability (see Cooper 2008). This distinguishes some celebrities as particularly effective in cause work from other stars who simply engage in transnational “do-gooding” (see Littler 2008). Celebrity status sanctions the power of ethical consumption on affective claims, and celebrities are leaders in emotion. Celebrities are able to provide an anchoring for “affect” in contemporary society, and they facilitate embedding such affect into a brand and can do this in ways that ordinary individuals cannot. There is increasing interest in affect in the fields of geography, cultural studies, and international political economy (for example, see Ahmed 2004; Anderson 2006; Gammon 2008; Horton and Kraftl 2009). The term is used in classical psychology to refer to the middle ground between cognition and behavior: The affective realm is connected to this chain of causality between something experienced and the formulation of a reaction to that experience. Perceptions of helping, of common interest, and of heroism, cross boundaries in the new forms of North–South relations we highlight in this forum.

Each of the circles in our conceptual model contains both material and symbolic forms, representing “regimes of value” as described by Appadurai (1986) in reference to the arrangements of meanings created by signifying images and objects within the specificity of commodity culture. These regimes of value are constructs of the social imaginary, which give significance to experience through discourse. Thus, value for Appadurai refers both to economic or material value and also to the non-economic categories and understandings of particular commodity arrangements. New North–South relations are created in which consumption becomes the mechanism for action and purchase creates partnership between individual consumers, international business, development organizations, and ultimately beneficiaries in the global South. The relationship is created, not simply documented, through the discourses, images, narratives, and “truths” communicated as part of Brand Aid. As the regimes of value between celebrities, causes, and branded products overlap, opportunities are created for consumers to participate in global “helping.”

Our Brand Aid model suggests four empirical areas for future research: The first area is on *consumer perceptions and values* (BA, CRM). It is necessary to understand consumer perceptions and values in order to evaluate the impact of ethical consumption on other forms of giving on the one hand and on other possibilities of consumption on the other. Some studies suggest that consumers who buy cause-related products are likely to give less money in donations than those who do not (for example, Krishna 2011). Also, it is not yet understood whether consumers *add* cause-products to their array of ethical products such as fair trade or organics, or whether there is substitution effect. The second area is on *celebrity mediation status* (BA, CIC). The importance of global do-gooding for the creation of global celebrity has been suggested on the basis of Northern research (Littler 2008), but which celebrity mediation mechanisms are used in which kinds of causes, or associated with the promotion of some values over others, merit further study. Also, the differences between “local” celebrity mediation in diverse cultures, and how causes and/or products are promoted, are important elements of cross-cultural theorizing. The third area concerns whether engagement in a cause actually has positive impacts on putative *cause beneficiaries* (BA, CRM, CIC). To understand this, deeper knowledge is needed on how particular initiatives impact those who are supposed to be “helped”—whether they are neighbors (North–North; South–South) or distant others (North–South). And fourth, we need to understand the possible impacts on *other value chain actors* (including corporations) involved in the production and marketing of cause-related products (BA, CRM). In BA and CRM initiatives, a cause may or may not be directly linked to a product’s social and environmental conditions of production. It is therefore important to assess what impact these initiatives have on value chain actors that produce, trade, process, and distribute these products.

Further IPS research is needed to develop a cross-cultural understanding of how values shape contemporary consumption and how consumer choice materializes values. Consumption has become the process for manifesting meaning in neoliberal times, as ethical consumption is part of defining “the good life,” challenging our understandings of parochial/cosmopolitan, North/South, and self/Other.

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Branding Order

STEFANO GUZZINI

Danish Institute for International Studies and Uppsala University

The triumph of utilitarianism seems inexorable. Ever since the advent of market economies, we have been told that trying to maximize personal profits also contributes to the overall wealth of the community. Today, however, in order to become socially acceptable, sheer wealth can no longer constitute an aim in itself, but needs qualifiers attached to it (justice, sustainability, etc.). Against this background, the mechanism of Brand Aid harnesses profit-motives and a sense of global responsibility to produce an almost miraculous overall increase of pleasure. Everyone wins: the consumer “distinguished” by brand and charity, the socially responsible producer, and the now medicated (hence longer-surviving) AIDS patient in Africa. In the past, “what is good for General Motors is good for America,” showed just how much the business elite had lost touch with its society, fundamentally unable to fix the conundrum of private gain and public good. Now, Brand Aid does the trick. “What is good for business is good for all,” as an American Express representative put it (Richey and Ponte 2011:5). With Brand Aid, the focus is no longer on “making money to do later (charitable) good,” but rather making money *is* doing the good: Profitability is the moral framework. Shopping is morally great—and this applies not only to insipid bio muesli, but also to classy suits. No more apologies needed.

As the preceding pages show, there is considerable unease with the position this presents to the social observer. No observer is naïve enough to buy this argument without serious doubts, not just about motives, but also about the mechanism’s actual effect. Such doubt is the starting point for scientific investigation. And off we (should) go. Yet, any investigative positioning is immediately politicized and moralized. Who wants to end up branded as an un-hip left(-over) fundamentalist who has not yet understood the virtues of the market? Who wants to be seen undermining an initiative that saves the lives of people?

A straightforward way out of this conundrum is an internal critique, proposed by many of the contributors of this Forum. Do we actually know that Brand Aid is providing more overall pleasure than its alternatives? In utilitarian terms, it is about the possible substitution effects of Brand Aid and a calculus of opportunity costs that may yet end up in the negative. There is no such a thing as free Brand Aid. Such substitution can be direct in terms of overall money provided to aid, or money taken away from certain type of aid programs: by favoring quantifiable measures (pills and drugs), ready to be continuously reported to all concerned “stakeholders,” it works at the expense of less measurable policies, such as education and general health infrastructure, although the latter’s effect can be more long term and “sustainable.” But it can also be indirect in that it

preempts solutions other than those driven by market mechanisms, although we know of the latter that they hardly provide health to “all” (see the American Express representative above). It furthermore substitutes, and on a lower level of commitment and efficiency, other already existing ethical product standards, such as fair trade, and their specific non-market-based mechanisms. Finally, ending a list that could go on, welfare states (also Christian-Democratic ones) that were established to redeem solidarity from charity by institutionalizing rights which enabled systematic transfers (Esping-Andersen 1990), must see their rights-based contracts undermined (at what cost? To whom?) by Brand Aid’s reintroduction of charity mechanisms. The bottom line is that we have to count the losses as well as the gains.

Moving on to an external critique, it is far from self-evident that encouraging individualism, social distinction driven by conspicuous consumption, indeed hedonism, among the general public, is a safe bet for sustained efforts against global inequalities, of which access to healthcare is just one component. It may raise awareness, as Klooster writes in this Forum, and that is laudable. But what kind of awareness? Critics in the preceding pages have had a field day exposing the multiple gender and race biases in Brand Aid’s representational politics of aid, disease, African and global politics. *Brand Aid* also shows how this mechanism is a “disengaged” form of Corporate Social Responsibility which fails to build links between the people at its two ends—the Red-consuming rich and the ARV drug-consuming Africans. And whereas Brand Aid does not necessarily develop public virtue, it suggests that it does—a nightmare for Republican ethics. In the unstoppable expansion of the market, altruism has become merchandise branded as a gift.

And yet, such external critique will hardly convince defenders of Brand Aid. When critics get hung up on the righteousness, if not cynicism, emanating from Brand Aid’s protagonists, the latter can point out how they are playing a trick on cynicism for the common good. That “sinners make the best saints” is a provocation that comes with tongue-in-cheek, and yet it mobilizes the classical sense of superiority of the established player in the field. Brand Aid’s more reasonable defense distinguishes between the politically feasible and the ethically reachable, making a virtue not only out of consumerist vice but also out of (alleged) necessity: “pragmatism, not ideology” (as quoted in Richey and Ponte 2011:47). Morgenthau once said that it was a dangerous thing to be a Machiavelli and a disastrous one to be a Machiavelli without *virtù* (quoted in Ashley 1984:225). Brand Aid purports to be Machiavelli with *virtù*.

The problem with this stance is also well known. In Edward Carr’s (1946:chapter 4) words, it is impossible to be a throughout realist. For any defense that relies on a given necessity is reifying that necessity, since history does not stand still. Any stance which, in Hirschman’s (1991) wonderful words, exposes the futility, jeopardy, or perversity of change is itself a rhetorical tool serving the status quo. It may be pragmatism; it is surely ideology. But without the successful political drive to render our markets more ethical, business would not have developed “ethical investment,” or CSR, or whatever standards that are now necessary to become a respectable (and hence selling) producer in the market. Realism *follows* utopia. And it responds to an environment always in flux, never given. Brand Aid only makes sense in a social contract that is no longer the one of General Motors in the famous quote, nor the welfarist one of the 1970s. Brand Aid is not only reacting to circumstances, it is shaping them. Pretending otherwise is both ideological and unrealistic.

With the underbrush cleared, one can move forward on various research paths. One track, exposed by many in this Forum, is to more thoroughly analyze the phenomenon itself within the terms set out by *Brand Aid*: the precise patterns of consumption and substitution, the role of celebrities and companies

within the specific production environment, and the effect on the cause beneficiaries—applying all, as Parpart insists in this Forum, also to the market environment of the Global South. The balance sheet of Brand Aid is still to be drawn. Another track connects this micro-oriented analysis with the general picture, that is, how Brand Aid can be understood against the emerging patterns of global governance. This touches questions of security, but also the changing character of foreign aid and the role of health as an agenda-setting mechanism within the emerging global political order (see, respectively, Hansen, Craddock, and King in this Forum). More fundamentally, it could help to remedy one of the problems IPE has faced over the last decades (see the controversy following Cohen 2007). After a start in which rather comprehensive analytical frameworks of the world political economy were the central focus (Cox 1987; Gilpin 1987; Strange 1988), the analysis became increasingly issue-specific, sectoral, ultimately case comparative, rather than transnational and global. *Brand Aid* combines a micro-view of the culture of capitalism in different local settings with a vertical link in terms of the value-chains within which those corporations and international organizations organize this “good-doing.” This ingenious link can easily relate to the original focus on the global order, via Foucauldian biopolitics (see Goodman in this Forum), or more general attempts to make IPE meet Foucault (for example, Guzzini and Neumann 2012) or redefine IPE through IPS (Leander 2009, 2011).

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