

המחלקה לסוציולוגיה ואנתרופולוגיה

הסמינר המחלקתי

<https://zoom.us/j/92496037142> Meeting ID: 924 9603 7142

יום רביעי 24/06/2020 השעות בין 12:15-13:45

Shai M. Dromi

Above the Fray: The Red Cross and the Making of the Humanitarian NGO Sector



ואנתרופולוגיה לסוציולוגיה המחלקה

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Abstract:

From Lake Chad to Iraq, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) provide relief around the globe, and their scope is growing every year. Policymakers and activists often assume that humanitarian aid is best provided by these organizations, which are generally seen as impartial and neutral. In *Above the Fray*, Shai M. Dromi investigates why the international community overwhelmingly trusts humanitarian NGOs by looking at the historical development of their culture. With a particular focus on the Red Cross, Dromi reveals that NGOs arose because of the efforts of orthodox Calvinists, demonstrating for the first time the origins of the unusual moral culture that has supported NGOs for the past 150 years.

Drawing on archival research, Dromi traces the genesis of the Red Cross to a Calvinist movement working in mid-nineteenth-century Geneva. He shows how global humanitarian policies emerged from the Red Cross founding members' faith that an international volunteer program not beholden to the state was the only ethical way to provide relief to victims of armed conflict. By illustrating how Calvinism shaped the humanitarian field, Dromi argues for the key role belief systems play in establishing social fields and institutions. Ultimately, Dromi shows the immeasurable social good that NGOs have achieved, but also points to their limitations and suggests that alternative models of humanitarian relief need to be considered.



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Shai M. Dromi is a lecturer on sociology at Harvard University. He is a comparative-historical sociologist with research on humanitarian organizations, human rights movements, and political and organizational culture. His book *Above the Fray: The Red Cross and the Making of the Humanitarian NGO Sector* is forthcoming with the University of Chicago Press and his recent articles appeared in *Sociological Theory* and *Theory and Society*.

