

EUROPEAN MASTER IN HUMAN RIGHTS & DEMOCRATISATION

Human Rights in Numbers:

Do Global Quantitative Human Rights Indicators
Change the International Human Rights Discourse?

ARNE HOFFMANN

Ph.D Erik André ANDERSEN
Danish Institute for Human Rights

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University of Southern Denmark

*“The death of a single man is a tragedy.
The disappearance of a million people is a statistic”*
Joseph Stalin

Abstract:

After 60 years of formal existence, the current human rights regime faces one of its major transformations. Following a longer constituting process with the device of international legal instruments, now, the focus shifts to the actual measurement of human rights implementation.

Spilling over from democracy, governance and development measurement, quantitative indicators are more and more perceived to be messianic contributors towards fast and transparent human rights measurement.

While the greater part of the literature elaborates on feasibility and data reliability challenges, this thesis explores basic conceptual changes inherent to the turn towards quantitative measurement. The three *trends* of universalisation, technologisation and paternalisation of the human rights discourse are detected as consequences of the quantification process. These trends entail decisions over each of five traditional and long debated *conflicts* (universalism vs. cultural relativism, teleological vs. deontological reasoning of human rights, the definition problem, rights hierarchy and the continuous struggle for participation of different stakeholders), eradicating an open discourse, and thus alter, unnoticed by scholars and practitioners, the human rights discourse in its fundamentals.

Proving this, the thesis contributes to self-reflection so that the human rights world is aware of the trade-off it agrees in by relying on quantitative indicators as measurement tools for human rights.

Further Explanations of Editing:

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Citations, with up to three lines are inserted in the text. Citations with more lines are displayed in an extra paragraph.

All figures and tables are devised by the author and thus need no reference.

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