Respecting Human Rights in the On-Demand Economy: Closing the New Governance Gap

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Why did we select this research?

We are in the midst of a dramatic economic revolution, a revolution that is driven by rapidly evolving technology, the rise of big data, and changing attitudes towards both employment and services. This article seeks to apply a business and human rights lens to these new economic models. There is a striking parallel between the rise of the on-demand economy and the rapid globalization of the economy in the 1980s and 90s, with respect to human rights. Rapid globalization exposed governance gaps where global, national and local institutions and regulatory frameworks were ill-equipped to address human rights impacts stemming from rapidly expanding economic activities globally.

Key Findings

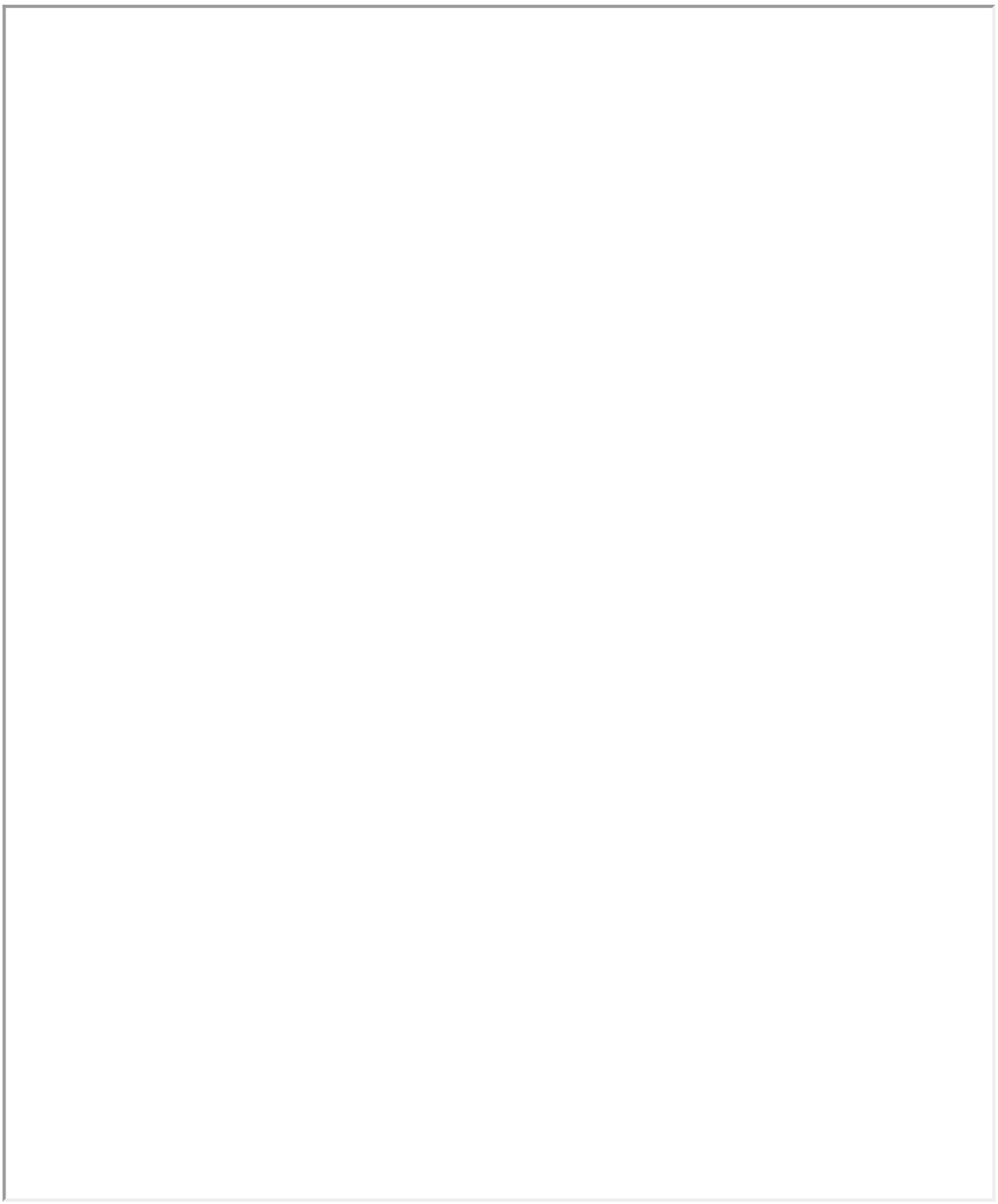
- Legal protections of employees' social security and insurance benefits are becoming less relevant as a growing percentage of the workforce, willingly or unwillingly, transitions to independent contractor status in the "gig" economy. while , for some, working as an independent contractor might be preferable, for others, this shift could impact the workers' rights to protection against unemployment and to the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness or disability.

- New models in the on-demand economy have the potential to create significant new economic opportunities.

- Many of the new platforms can be used to address humanitarian challenges, quickly facilitating assistance to people in need.

- For the on-demand economy, the UN GPs can provide a useful framework to delineate the responsibility of different actors to address human rights concerns, and to determine how companies can effectively manage human rights risks.

- Companies have a responsibility to respect which exists independently of the state duty to protect human rights of its citizens. For companies in the sharing and on-demand economies, meeting the responsibility to respect requires more than advancing specific human rights causes such as non-discrimination or humanitarian innovation. While noeworthy and laudable, such efforts should lead to, rather than substitute for a comprehensive and proactive human rights due diligence approach.



Reference

Natour, F. (2016) Respecting Human Rights in the On-Demand Economy: Closing the New Governance Gap. *Business and Humand Rights Journal,* Vol. 1: 315-320.