

# Google's Tech Philanthropy Capitalism and Humanitarianism in the Digital Age

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# Google's Tech Philanthropy: Capitalism and Humanitarianism in the Digital Age

## Abstract

Transnational tech companies have become important actors in global philanthropy. Led by tech giants such as Google, this tech philanthropy consists not just of donating funds to expert organizations and NGOs but also, importantly, in using the companies' own expertise and products to create social impact. This philanthropy is celebrated as innovative and criticized as exploitative for its novel ways of combining capitalism with global helping. But in what way is tech philanthropy novel and to what extent does it continue the well-worn historical trajectory of humanitarianism and capitalism? In this paper, we analyze the philanthropic practices of Google focusing on the company's current attempt to link philanthropy to the big business of artificial intelligence (AI). Based on ethnographic data collected at the "Google AI Impact Challenge Summit" in San Francisco and interviews with tech and humanitarian stakeholders, we highlight the entanglements of capitalism and humanitarianism in tech philanthropy.

**Keywords:** Philanthropy – Technology companies – Humanitarianism – AI – Capitalism – Google.

## Introduction: Locating the Spectacle of Google's Tech Philanthropy

"All right, well, welcome everyone" Jacqueline Fuller, President of Google.org, declared as she stepped up on stage, smiling and clapping her hands together once.<sup>1</sup> "I am so excited to be here. In fact, yesterday, I was sitting with a friend having lunch and she said, 'OK, of *all* the stuff you are working on across Google and Google.org, what are you most excited about?' And I said, *this* room." She pointed her index fingers to the audience in a motion that followed

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<sup>1</sup> This rendering is from the participant observation fieldnotes of the first author who attended the event. Fuller's recorded keynote can be seen [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3_OrY0-_Us&ab_channel=Google.org): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3\\_OrY0-\\_Us&ab\\_channel=Google.org](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3_OrY0-_Us&ab_channel=Google.org) (Accessed 4 January 2022).

the rhythm of her words. “What is happening in this room, the partnerships that are going on here, the progress that is being made here, is absolutely the best and most exciting thing I have seen in my 12 years at Google.org.” The room indicated by Fuller’s pointing was a big, green-lit auditorium in The Grove. This convention center, enigmatically called a “Google Experience Studio,” is located in Redwood City in the Bay Area of Northern California and is designed with selected inspiration from the nearby redwood forests. The violent politicized history of the “Redwood Summer” thirty years before, when environmental activists like the celebrity Julia Butterfly Hill sat two years, perched in the giant trees to defend them from the Pacific Lumber Company, is completely obfuscated by the naturalization of tech.<sup>2</sup>

Arriving in the parking lot of The Grove, a large Google sign constructed from pieces of wood, rocks, and braided willow with the “e” hanging from a tree branch, displayed the theme. From the reception of The Grove, guests were directed to a lobby through a slightly curved tunnel of oblong shapes of wood, resembling the gills of a mushroom. Soft country music was pouring from the hidden speakers, perhaps an ironic gesture to the historical fistfights between activists and timber workers. The vast lobby had high ceilings and seating areas scattered around the room. On the left side of the room, which had large windows looking out into a courtyard, tall fake trees formed a circle around a digital campfire – a stack of tablets and smartphones all displaying images of burning wood and coals, arranged in the shape of a campfire.<sup>3</sup> On the right side of the room, a coffee and tea buffet was set up. There were baskets full of dried fruits, candy bars, gummy bears, and cold beverages in big ice buckets. The website for The Grove describes the venue as:

An authentic, flexible, and innovative space that showcases Google’s position at the cutting edge of technology while also delivering engaging, user-focused design to immerse guests into the Google experience. From the Digital Campfire, a Google Assistant-powered gathering place created with the latest Google Pixel devices, to the Redwood Trail, an interactive tunnel that uses machine learning algorithms to improvise and play music live, there are countless moments of magic throughout The Grove where Google technology seamlessly enhances the guest experience.

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<sup>2</sup> Speece, D. F. (2019). *Defending Giants: The Redwood Wars and the Transformation of American Environmental Politics*. Seattle: University of Washington Press; Sowards A. M. (2020). The Lessons of Redwood Summer, Thirty Years Later. *High Country News*, September.

<sup>3</sup> A video presentation of this can be seen [here](http://www.andrewdorourke.com/google/): <http://www.andrewdorourke.com/google/> (Accessed 4 January 2022).

Storytelling and guest-centric designs throughout the center provide interactive and playful moments for customers, partners, and Google employees alike.<sup>4</sup>

This venue, promoted as a space mixing nature, playfulness, innovation, storytelling, and the seamless infusion of Google technology, provided the scene, literally and symbolically, for the event analyzed in this paper: *The Google AI Impact Challenge Summit*.

We examine this event in the context of our broader interest in commodified forms of global “helping,”<sup>5</sup> including corporations’ engagement in humanitarianism. Such corporate humanitarian engagements, exemplified in this paper by Google’s philanthropic endeavors, merge forms of humanitarianism and capitalism. Neither humanitarianism nor capitalism are naturally occurring or static universal objects, but rather historically and politically configured domains with evolving practices and ideologies. As Apthorpe and Borton have argued in this journal, “compassion across borders can cost as well as save lives, kill as well as be kind, or in effect make little difference either way.”<sup>6</sup> Technology companies are on the frontiers of global philanthropy, offering what they claim are innovative solutions to global crises and the shortcomings of the humanitarian sector in solving them.<sup>7</sup> This development, in which tech companies use their products and expertise “for social good,” is both celebrated and denounced as the political and social influence of tech companies in society is increasingly scrutinized.<sup>8</sup> But in what ways is this tech philanthropy novel and to what extent does it continue the well-worn historical trajectory of humanitarianism and capitalism? To explore these questions, we turn to one of the world’s top three tech companies, Google,<sup>9</sup> and its current attempt to link philanthropy to the big business of artificial intelligence (AI).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Thinkwell. (2021). Google: The Grove Experience Center. *Thinkwellgroup.com*, <https://thinkwellgroup.com/project/google-the-grove-experience-center/>.

<sup>5</sup> This is part of a research project entitled: Commodifying Compassion: Implications of Turning People and Humanitarian Causes into Marketable Things. [www.comodifyingcompassion.com](http://www.comodifyingcompassion.com). See also: Richey, L. A. (2019). Eclipsed by the Halo: ‘Helping’ Brands through Dissociation. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, Vol. 9(1): 78–82, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820619831139>.

<sup>6</sup> Apthorpe, R. and Borton, J. (2019). Disaster-Affected Populations and ‘Localization’: What Role for Anthropology Following the World Humanitarian Summit? *Public Anthropologist*, Vol. 1(2):135, <https://doi.org/10.1163/25891715-00102001>.

<sup>7</sup> McGoey, L. (2016). *No Such Thing as a Free Gift: The Gates Foundation and the Price of Philanthropy*. London: Verso.

<sup>8</sup> Bughin, J. et al. (2019). Tech for Good Smoothing Disruption, Improving Well-Being. *McKinsey Global Institute*, May: 1–78; Schleifer, T. (2020). Tech Giants Should Give Away Their Money Instead of Their Products. *Vox*, March 31.

<sup>9</sup> Wood, T. (2020). The World’s Tech Giants, Ranked by Brand Value. *Visual Capitalist*, <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/the-worlds-tech-giants-ranked/>.

<sup>10</sup> AI is arguably the fastest growing business of our time; for example, Dauvergne describes the big business of AI and gives the example that AI business value is set to rise from \$700 million in 2017 to \$4 trillion in 2022.

Our primary site of fieldwork is the Google AI Impact Challenge Summit, held in Redwood City, California, on February 13, 2020. This event was the culmination of the AI Impact Challenge issued by the company in the fall 2018 on “how to use AI to help address society’s most pressing problems.”<sup>11</sup> Attendees of the event were mostly young people in their 20s and 30s from diverse cultural backgrounds working for tech companies, nonprofit organizations, and humanitarian agencies, with the majority coming from nonprofits. The atmosphere is illustrated in this vignette of spontaneous birthday greetings:

During breakfast, which was served in the lobby before the event began, a man in his 30s with a loud voice and his company name “Gringo Trash Tech” on his shirt went around the crowds of people asking each person if he could record them saying happy birthday to his wife. “It’s my wife’s birthday and I am putting together a video for her of strangers telling her happy birthday, it’ll be hilarious” he told me as I was putting black beans from the breakfast buffet onto my plate. I smiled, looked into his smartphone camera, and said “happy birthday” to a person I will never meet.<sup>12</sup>

As the excerpt suggests, the world’s most pressing problems were set to be solved in an environment that was friendly, casual, and energetic.

Our methodology mixes participant observation and interviews with video and textual analysis. The first author participated in the Google AI Impact Challenge Summit event in California, and both authors analyzed the summit documents as well as the 11 videos publicly available online from the summit presentations. We also draw on Google’s own reporting from the event (on their website and in reports) as well as material from interviews with tech and humanitarian stakeholders conducted in person and online by the first author between January 2020 and January 2021. These interviews were with representatives from tech companies (Google, Microsoft, Accenture, Zendesk, Box), and NGOs (International Rescue Committee, Nethope, Mercy Corps) working in the intersection between humanitarianism, philanthropy, and technology.

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Dauvergne, P. (2020). *AI in the Wild: Sustainability in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 36–38.

<sup>11</sup> Google (2019). *Accelerating Social Good with Artificial Intelligence: Insights from the Google AI Impact Challenge*.

<sup>12</sup> Fieldnotes by first author, February 13, 2020.

In recent years, a growing space has emerged in this intersection, in which tech companies,<sup>13</sup> humanitarian organizations and social enterprises collaborate to design, develop, fund, and implement digital technology “for good.” This space goes by many names and is not a clearly defined group or practice empirically or in the literatures. Because we value the perspectives of the people and organizations we research in constructing, as well as responding to social forces like capitalism, in our analysis, we use the emic term “AI for social good” to describe this field. This term was used by the attendees of the Impact Challenge Summit and expresses their vision of what they do. We refer strictly to interviews and documents from the organization as a presentation of how they frame and create their humanitarian space. This is not to be read as an acritical acceptance of these claims, as we specify in our analysis.

A diverse body of literature has begun to examine emerging forms of “good-doing” by tech companies, through which their business models and data practices are intertwined with their philanthropy. These scholars have shown how humanitarian engagements from tech companies (like those of other business actors) are often driven by profit motives<sup>14</sup> and how contemporary aid is imbued with capitalist logics and practices through such business engagements.<sup>15</sup> As we illustrate in this paper, for-profit motives are not hidden features in “AI for social good.” Rather, profitability is highlighted as a key part of using AI for good. Scholars have thus critically noted how “AI for social good” (as a material and discursive phenomenon) frames controversial and profitable data practices as having public value and thereby obscures the power relations and politics of digital capitalism.<sup>16</sup> The growing intersection between humanitarianism, digital technology, and capitalism is characterized by Madianou as a reinvigoration of the colonial power structures that have shaped both capitalism

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<sup>13</sup> By tech companies, we refer in this article to multinational companies in the technology sector that produce and sell digital electronics, software, and internet services. These companies are also referred to as Internet companies and technology platform businesses, see e.g. Flyverbom, M., Deibert, R. and Matten, D. (2019). The Governance of Digital Technology, Big Data, and the Internet: New Roles and Responsibilities for Business. *Business and Society*, Vol. 58(1): 3–19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650317727540>; Atal, M. R. (2020). The Janus Faces of Silicon Valley. *Review of International Political Economy*: 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1830830>.

<sup>14</sup> Schwittay, A. (2012). Incorporated Citizens: Multinational High-Tech Companies and the BoP. *Information Technologies & International Development*, Vol. 8(1): 43–56.

<sup>15</sup> Burns, R. (2019). ‘Let the Private Sector Take Care of This’: The Philanthro-Capitalism of Digital Humanitarianism. In: M. Graham, ed., *Digital Economies at Global Margins*, MIT Press, pp. 129–52; Fejerskov, A. F. (2017). The New Technopolitics of Development and the Global South as a Laboratory of Technological Experimentation. *Science Technology and Human Values*, Vol. 42(5): 947–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243917709934>.

<sup>16</sup> Cinnamon, J. (2020). Platform Philanthropy, ‘Public Value’, and the COVID-19 Pandemic Moment. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, Vol. 10(2): 242–45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820620933860>.

and humanitarianism.<sup>17</sup> Through the notion of “technocolonialism,” Madianou explores “how digital and data practices rework and amplify colonial legacies” in humanitarianism.<sup>18</sup> In her analysis of “AI for good,” she similarly finds that such practices, enabled by the “enchantment of technology,” reproduce global inequality.<sup>19</sup>

In this paper, we contribute to this critical scholarship by exploring how “AI for social good” re-articulates links between humanitarianism and capitalism in corporate philanthropy. In doing so, our analysis draws on insights from a growing anthropological literature on the ongoing material and ideological transformations of humanitarianism. These transformations have been particularly visible as a renewed enthusiasm in the humanitarian sector for including new technologies, private sector actors and “innovative” practices.<sup>20</sup> Anthropologists and others have carefully examined the development and politics of humanitarian goods (such as fuel-efficient stoves,<sup>21</sup> refugee shelters<sup>22</sup> and water filtering straws<sup>23</sup>), humanitarian logistics<sup>24</sup> and humanitarian markets.<sup>25</sup> According to Scott-Smith,<sup>26</sup> these developments signify an ideological transformation towards what he terms “humanitarian neophilia,” through which classical humanitarian principles are challenged in favor of a view of aid as a series of “products and business models.”<sup>27</sup> The technologizing of humanitarian space<sup>28</sup> in this sense refers both to an expanding interest in developing technical

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<sup>17</sup> Madianou, M. (2019). Technocolonialism: Digital Innovation and Data Practices in the Humanitarian Response to Refugee Crises. *Social Media + Society*, Vol. 5(3): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119863146>; Madianou, M. Technological Futures as Colonial Debris: ‘Tech-for-Good’ as Technocolonialism. In: J. Zylinska, ed., *The Future of Media*, Goldsmiths Press.

<sup>18</sup> Madianou, Technocolonialism: Digital Innovation and Data Practices in the Humanitarian Response to Refugee Crises, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Madianou, M. (2021). Nonhuman Humanitarianism: When ‘AI for Good’ Can Be Harmful. *Information Communication and Society*, Vol. 24(6): 850–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1909100>.

<sup>20</sup> Müller, T. R. and Sou, G. (2020). Innovation in Humanitarian Action. *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs*, Vol. 1(3): 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.7227/jha.019>.

<sup>21</sup> Abdelnour, S. and Saeed, A. M. (2014). Technologizing Humanitarian Space: Darfur Advocacy and the Rape-Stove Panacea. *International Political Sociology*, Vol. 8(2): 145–63, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ips.12049>.

<sup>22</sup> Pascucci, E. (2021). Refugee Shelter in a Logistical World: Designing Goods for Supply-Chain Humanitarianism. *Antipode*, Vol. 53(1): 260–78, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12680>; Scott-Smith, T. (2019). Places for People: Architecture, Building and Humanitarian Innovation. *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs*, Vol.1(3): 14–22.

<sup>23</sup> Redfield, P. (2016). Fluid Technologies: The Bush Pump, the LifeStraw® and Microworlds of Humanitarian Design. *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 46(2): 159–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312715620061>.

<sup>24</sup> Pascucci, E. (2021). More Logistics, Less Aid: Humanitarian-Business Partnerships and Sustainability in the Refugee Camp. *World Development*, Vol. 142, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105424>.

<sup>25</sup> Cross, J. (2020). Capturing Crisis. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 38(2): 105–24, <https://doi.org/10.3167/cja.2020.380208>.

<sup>26</sup> Scott-Smith, T. (2016). Humanitarian Neophilia: The ‘Innovation Turn’ and Its Implications. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 37(12): 2229–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2016.1176856>.

<sup>27</sup> Scott-Smith, 2236. See also Hopgood, S. (2008). Saying ‘No’ to Wal-Mart? In: M. Barnett and T. G. Weiss, eds., *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*, Cornell University Press, pp. 98–123.

<sup>28</sup> Abdelnour and Saeed, Technologizing Humanitarian Space: Darfur Advocacy and the Rape-Stove Panacea.

fixes for humanitarian problems and a discursive reframing of human suffering into technical design challenges and “manageable problems” that warrant such technical fixes.<sup>29</sup> While these developments may be interpreted as examples of the ever-expanding processes of capitalist accumulation, the scholars mentioned above urge us to recognize how such market-based approaches to humanitarian aid represent, rework and extend particular forms of care for distant others.<sup>30</sup> Rather than an expression of the neoliberalization of aid, Redfield analyzes the development of “life technologies” such as nonprofit drugs, therapeutic foods and water straws as humanitarian goods that represent a minimalist form of bodily care in response to decreasing trust in the state’s capacity to ensure the lives of its citizens.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Cross describes the evolving humanitarian market for solar energy in refugees camps as an extension of a particular form of care that emphasizes the inclusion of refugees into a modern market economy.<sup>32</sup> In sum, the literature demonstrates the shifting entanglements of morality and materiality in humanitarianism within a context of increased private sector engagement. Our analysis of Google’s philanthropy, and the notions of “AI for social good” it promotes, contributes to this current discussion by examining the kind of care that is imagined in the application of “AI for social good” and how this particular care for distant others is construed through the promotion of technological products.

In the following sections, we situate the links between humanitarianism and capitalism in a brief historical context moving into capitalism’s current dominant form labelled digital capitalism. We draw on recent critiques of digital capitalism as “capitalism in new clothes” to frame our analysis of how Google’s philanthropy, packaged as innovation, extends a history of humanitarian engagement driven by capitalist motivations. We unfold this analysis in three subsequent parts focusing on the framework and model for Google’s “for-profit philanthropy,” Google’s “impact challenges” and the discourse of “AI for social good” promoted by Google. Drawing on our fieldwork and critical literatures on humanitarianism and corporate philanthropy, in these sections we show how Google’s philanthropic practices help the company evade corporate and nonprofit regulations, expand their markets, and enforce a “win-win” imaginary of AI’s potential for social good through notions of risk and

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<sup>29</sup> Duffield, M. (2019). Post-Humanitarianism: Governing Precarity through Adaptive Design. *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs*, Vol. 1(1): 15–27; Abdelnour and Saeed, Technologizing Humanitarian Space: Darfur Advocacy and the Rape-Stove Panacea.

<sup>30</sup> Cross, Capturing Crisis.

<sup>31</sup> Redfield, P. (2012). Bioexpectations: Life Technologies as Humanitarian Goods. *Public Culture*, Vol. 24(1): 157–84, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-1443592>.

<sup>32</sup> Cross, Capturing Crisis.



acceleration. Then, we discuss the implications of Google’s philanthropy for the way “social good” and humanitarian problems are defined. In the final section, we return to the links between humanitarianism and capitalism and reflect on the ways in which these links are expressed in the case of Google’s AI philanthropy.

## **Historical Links Between Humanitarianism and Capitalism**

By now, the claim that humanitarianism and the aid sector is permeated by political and economic interests, will come as a surprise to few. However, humanitarianism has traditionally been perceived as (ideally at least) separate from the sphere of business<sup>33</sup> and scholars have frequently pointed to an apparent contradiction between companies’ drive to profit-maximization and humanitarian principles.<sup>34</sup> The underlying perception that humanitarianism, which relies on altruism, and capitalism, which relies on economic self-interest, are fundamentally contradictory is visible in contemporary rhetoric on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate philanthropy, which highlights how to overcome this contradiction. For example, scholars and practitioners have presented “the business case” for companies’ humanitarian engagement<sup>35</sup> and found new proof that you can “do well by doing good.”<sup>36</sup> Popular theories of triple bottom lines, win-win-win solutions, bottom of the pyramid strategies,<sup>37</sup> and philanthrocapitalism<sup>38</sup> have emerged to make the case that by adopting new business perspectives, the disparate logics and practices of humanitarianism and capitalism can be combined and yield “shared value.”<sup>39</sup> From a critical perspective, scholars have pointed to increasing commercial interests in humanitarian crises and disasters.<sup>40</sup> Notably, Naomi Klein argues in “The Shock Doctrine” that natural disasters, wars and economic crises become

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<sup>33</sup> Hopgood, Saying ‘No’ to Wal-Mart?

<sup>34</sup> Binder, A. and Witte, J. M. (2007). Business Engagement in Humanitarian Relief: Key Trends and Policy Implications. *HPG Background Paper*, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> OCHA (2017). *The Business Case: A Study of Private Sector Engagement in Humanitarian Action*.

<sup>36</sup> See review of strategic CSR in Valentin, S. and Spence, L. J. (2017). Strategic CSR: Ambitions and Critiques. In: A. Rasche, M. Morsing and J. Moon, eds., *Corporate Social Responsibility - Strategy, Communication, Governance*, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>37</sup> Prahalad, C. K. and Hart, S. L. (2002). The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid. *Strategy+business* (26): 200–203.

<sup>38</sup> Bishop, M. and Green, M. (2008). *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the World*. New York: Bloomsbury.

<sup>39</sup> Porter, M. E. and Cramer, M. R. (2011). Creating Shared Value. *Harvard Business Review*, Jan-Feb.

<sup>40</sup> Pascucci, More Logistics, Less Aid: Humanitarian-Business Partnerships and Sustainability in the Refugee Camp; Lemberg-Pedersen, M. and Haioty, E. (2020). Re-Assembling the Surveillable Refugee Body in the Era of Data-Craving. *Citizenship Studies*, Vol. 24(5): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2020.1784641>.

opportunities for capitalists to advance their interests.<sup>41</sup> Anthropologists have brought out the contradictions inherent in these market attempts at (self) empowerment.<sup>42</sup>

However, scholars of humanitarianism argue that the merging of capitalism and humanitarianism is not new. In fact, the two have an intimate long-term relationship. Historians have analyzed and debated how capitalism – through the spread of capitalist markets<sup>43</sup> and the turn to wage labor<sup>44</sup> – led to a Western humanitarian sensibility best illustrated by the movement to abolish slavery that emerged in the end of the eighteenth century. Others have theorized the origins of humanitarianism as part of colonialist and imperialist governance tied up with capitalist imperatives to seek out new markets and resources<sup>45</sup> and linked commodity activism with imperialism.<sup>46</sup> This research echoes critical research on development policies as modern forms of imperialism aiming to expand capitalist exploitation through the promotion of free market ideologies.<sup>47</sup> In a more recent example on the convergence between humanitarianism and capitalism, historian Tehila Sasson shows how the 1970 Nestlé boycott campaigns exemplify a movement in social activism from fighting to limit the power of corporations to advocating for “ethical markets” in which corporations would regulate their own practices. Through this movement, “the market was transformed into a space for enforcing a global humanitarian ethic.”<sup>48</sup> This work aligns with critical analyses of the emergence of “just,” “fair” and “caring” capitalisms,<sup>49</sup> where capitalism is perceived not as the cause of social problems but as their solution.

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<sup>41</sup> Klein, N. (2007). *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. London: Penguin.

<sup>42</sup> Dolan, C. and Rajak, D. (2018). Speculative Futures at the Bottom of the Pyramid. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 24(2): 233–55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12808>.

<sup>43</sup> Haskell, T. L. (1985). Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2. *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 90(2): 339–61; Haskell, T. L. (1985). Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1. *The American Historical Review* Vol. 90(2): 339–61.

<sup>44</sup> Ashworth, J. (1987). The Relationship between Capitalism and Humanitarianism. *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 92(4): 813–28.

<sup>45</sup> Skinner, R. and Lester, A. (2012). Humanitarianism and Empire: New Research Agendas. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 40(5): 729–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2012.730828>.

<sup>46</sup> Budabin, A. and Richey, L. A. (2021). *Batman Saves the Congo: How Celebrities Disrupt the Politics of Development*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>47</sup> Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

<sup>48</sup> Sasson, T. (2016). Milking the Third World? Humanitarianism, Capitalism, and the Moral Economy of the Nestlé Boycott. *American Historical Review*, Vol. 121(4): 1224, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/121.4.1196>.

<sup>49</sup> Barman, E. (2016). *Caring Capitalism: The Meaning and Measure of Social Value*. New York: Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316104590>; Goodman, M. K. (2004). Reading Fair Trade: Political Ecological Imaginary and the Moral Economy of Fair Trade Foods. *Political Geography*, Vol. 23(7): 891–915, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2004.05.013>; Richey, L. A. and Ponte, S. (2011). *Brand Aid: Shopping Well to Save the World*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Within the field of economic anthropology, scholars have long documented the shifting ethics and moralities that have always permeated and constituted rather than stood in opposition to markets and economic interactions. Ethnographies of ethical consumption,<sup>50</sup> fair trade<sup>51</sup> and corporate social responsibility<sup>52</sup> schemes have further illustrated the messy entanglements of humanitarian sentiments and capitalist practices. Thus, in contrast to the idea that humanitarianism and capitalism have only recently found common ground, scholars are calling for a rewriting of the history of humanitarianism, to emphasize “the primary importance of capitalism as a source of specific motivations and interests in humanitarian action, and as the focus of an alternative narrative to the prevalent one based on altruism.”<sup>53</sup> However, while humanitarianism was never completely free of capitalist notions, the connections between the two domains have become more visible and explicitly celebrated in recent decades, illustrated for example by the growth of Brand Aid campaigns<sup>54</sup> and other forms of NGO-business partnerships.<sup>55</sup> The case analyzed in this paper illustrates this turn to more explicitly commodified practices of humanitarian helping.

To situate Google’s philanthropy within this historical context, we draw on recent scholarship on digital capitalism – a concept used to describe contemporary capitalism as a historical period in which 1) transnational production chains are enabled by digital technologies, 2) digital networks and infrastructures are privately owned and used to generate commercial profits, and 3) intra-firm management is organized through digital technologies.<sup>56</sup> A dynamic field of study has emerged to investigate this particular configuration of digital

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<sup>50</sup> Carrier, J. G. and Luetchford, P. G. (2012). *Ethical Consumption: Social Value and Economic Practice*. New York, NY: Berghahn Books.

<sup>51</sup> Berlan, A. (2008). Making or Marketing a Difference? An Anthropological Examination of the Marketing of Fair Trade Cocoa from Ghana. *Research in Economic Anthropology*, Vol. 28: 171–194, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0190-1281\(08\)28008-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0190-1281(08)28008-X); de Neve, G. (2008). *Hidden Hands in the Market: Ethnographies of Fair Trade, Ethical Consumption, and Corporate Social Responsibility*. Bingley.

<sup>52</sup> Rajak, D. (2011). *In Good Company: An Anatomy of Corporate Social Responsibility*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press; Dolan, C. and Rajak, D. (2016). *The Anthropology of Corporate Social Responsibility*. Berghahn Books.

<sup>53</sup> Dal Lago, E. and O'Sullivan, K. (2017). Introduction: Towards a New History of Humanitarianism. *Moving the Social*, Vol. 57: 5-20, p. 7, <https://doi.org/10.13154/mts.57.2017.5-20>.

<sup>54</sup> Richey, L. A. and Ponte, S. (2021). Brand Aid and Coffee Value Chain Development Interventions: Is Starbucks Working Aid out of Business? *World Development*, Vol. 143, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105193>.

<sup>55</sup> Olwig, M. F. (2021). Introduction: Commodifying Humanitarian Sentiments? The Black Box of the for-Profit and Non-Profit Partnerships. *World Development*, Vol. 145, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105536>.

<sup>56</sup> Pace, J. (2018). The Concept of Digital Capitalism. *Communication Theory*, Vol. 28(3): 255–56, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/ctx009>.

capitalism,<sup>57</sup> data capitalism,<sup>58</sup> platform capitalism,<sup>59</sup> transnational informational capitalism<sup>60</sup> and more. One of the most widely debated accounts is Zuboff's analysis of what she terms surveillance capitalism.<sup>61</sup> Zuboff explains that surveillance capitalism consists of a new logic of accumulation, which "aims to predict and modify human behavior as a means to produce revenue."<sup>62</sup> In the business model of surveillance capitalism, profits are generated by extracting user data, which is used to produce and feed algorithms that direct advertisements. Although Zuboff acknowledges that surveillance capitalism is just one point in the history of capitalism, in which "each era has run toward a dominant logic of accumulation,"<sup>63</sup> she presents surveillance capitalism as a profoundly unique formation of capitalism. However, according to Morozov, Zuboff's view of surveillance capitalism as a new economic order obscures the ways in which surveillance capitalism is a continuation of "the same old capitalism" with expanded surveillance methods.<sup>64</sup> These tech company surveillance strategies, Morozov argues, are merely local effects of a global and familiar capitalist cause to ensure long-term profitability in the face of competition. That is, surveillance capitalism is first and foremost capitalism - albeit in new clothes:

Surveillance capitalism must be theorized as "capitalism" – a complex set of historical and social relationships between capital and labor, the state and the monetary system, the metropole, and the periphery – and not just as an aggregate of individual firms responding to imperatives of technological and social change.<sup>65</sup>

What scholars fail to recognize, according to Morozov, is that the specific developments of contemporary capitalism (e.g., the growing investments in advanced technology) have been regular features of capitalist competition. Rather than structural shifts, these developments are "depictions of observed regularities in how capitalist firms expand their stocks of capital to

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<sup>57</sup> Pace, The Concept of Digital Capitalism; Schiller, D. (2011). Power Under Pressure: Digital Capitalism In Crisis. *International Journal of Communication*, Vol. 5: 18.

<sup>58</sup> West, S. M. (2019). Data Capitalism: Redefining the Logics of Surveillance and Privacy. *Business and Society*, Vol. 58(1): 20–41, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650317718185>.

<sup>59</sup> Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>60</sup> Fuchs, C. (2009). A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of Transnational Informational Capitalism. *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 21(3): 387–402, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08935690902955104>.

<sup>61</sup> Zuboff, S. (2015). Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization, *Journal of Information Technology*, Vol. 30(1): 75–89, <https://doi.org/10.1057/jit.2015.5>; Zuboff, S. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism - The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. Public Affairs.

<sup>62</sup> Zuboff, Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization, 75.

<sup>63</sup> Zuboff, 77.

<sup>64</sup> Morozov, E. (2019). Capitalism's New Clothes. *The Baffler*, 1–44.

<sup>65</sup> Morozov, 39.

include data.”<sup>66</sup> Thus, when we condemn surveillance capitalism and its stakeholders like Google for seeking to modify our behavior and purchases,<sup>67</sup> for profiting from the erosion of public budgets,<sup>68</sup> and for exploiting workers through empowerment-labelled schemes of digital microwork in the Middle East,<sup>69</sup> Morozov urges us to place this critique within a theoretical framework of capitalism.

Our paper draws on this scholarly debate to frame our inquiry into Google’s tech philanthropy. If digital capitalism is not a fundamentally new form of capitalism, is the way in which this capitalism intersects with humanitarianism in “AI for social good” really a new or innovative form of corporate philanthropy? Is it driven by the same imperatives that have historically linked capitalism and humanitarianism and if so, what is the advantage of branding it as something new and different from older forms of corporate humanitarian engagement? In the following sections, we explore this question through an analysis of Google’s philanthropic model, Google’s “Impact Challenges” and the notion of “AI for social good” underscoring these philanthropic activities.

### **Google’s For-Profit Philanthropy: Donations, People and Products**

The AI Impact Challenge we explore in this paper is just one part of Google’s philanthropic activities, carried out by the charitable arm of the company called Google.org. In an article about Google.org and the kind of impact the organization aspires to have through their philanthropy, the Google.org president is introduced with this opening line: “Every morning, Jacquelline Fuller wakes up at sunrise, wondering how to save the world.”<sup>70</sup> Before this current role, Fuller held a top position at the Gates Foundation and worked as a speech writer to the US Secretary of Health and Human Services. For more than a decade, she has sat on the board of influential NGOs and nonprofits such as World Vision, International Justice Mission and Ben Affleck’s Eastern Congo Initiative.<sup>71</sup> In her speech at the Google AI Impact

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<sup>66</sup> Morozov, E. (2019). Digital Socialism? *New Left Review*, (116–117): 41–42.

<sup>67</sup> Zuboff, S. (2020). You Are Now Remotely Controlled. *The New York Times*, January 24.

<sup>68</sup> Noble, S. (2020). The Loss of Public Goods to Big Tech. *Noema*, July 1.

<sup>69</sup> Hall, M. (2020). The Ghost of the Mechanical Turk. *Jacobin*, December.

<sup>70</sup> Fishwick, S. (2019). Google.Org’s Jacquelline Fuller on AI, Deep Fakes and Using Google’s Money for Good. *London Evening Standard*, May 29.

<sup>71</sup> For more on this initiative, see Budabin, A. & Richey, L. A. (2021). *Batman Saves the Congo*.

Challenge Summit, Fuller stated that the Impact Challenges were organized to harness the impact of Google:

How do we bring the best of Google, all our assets, and bring these to bear alongside the teams, the innovators, who are doing this work on the front lines? That is why we launched the single biggest initiative in Google.org's history, which is the Google AI Impact Challenge.<sup>72</sup>

In this quote, Fuller equates philanthropy with doing what Google already does, but to a larger and more socially conscious extent. As such, a central part of Google's philanthropy is to find the social issues where Google products will have the largest impact.<sup>73</sup> The former president of Google.org, Megan Smith, explained it this way: "We will look for things that could have global scale, are philanthropic in nature, and leverage what we are particularly good at. We have almost 10,000 engineers now. If we give grants that do not leverage any of their talents, they can't play."<sup>74</sup> Thus, in contrast to more traditional corporate philanthropy where company founders use their personal wealth to support humanitarian and social causes, Google.org aims to "do good" by applying their business model, skills and products to philanthropy. In doing so, Google.org seeks to replicate the disruptive impact they have had in the business world by targeting the social issues that will allow them to have the same impact on humanitarianism.<sup>75</sup>

In an interview conducted for this paper,<sup>76</sup> a Google.org employee, Martin,<sup>77</sup> explained Google.org's activities as falling into "three buckets:" philanthropy, people, and products. Martin, who held a senior position at Google.org despite his young age, spoke with confidence and knowledge about his company's philanthropic programs as if he was used to communicating this to media and journalists. He mastered the balance between being friendly, casual, and deeply professional, characteristic of the people working in the field of "AI for social good." He spoke fluently in a language that alternated between being direct and vague, weaving his own immigrant background and his mild personal skepticism of AI technology into a compelling narrative about the philanthropic ambitions of Google. The bucket of

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<sup>72</sup> Quote from the summit. Based on fieldnotes and the recording of Fuller's speech, which can be found [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3_OrY0-_Us): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3\\_OrY0-\\_Us](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3_OrY0-_Us)

<sup>73</sup> Google.org. (2021). *Our Work*. <https://www.google.org/our-work/> (Accessed 4 January 2022).

<sup>74</sup> Boss, S. (2010). Do No Evil. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Vol. 16: 9.

<sup>75</sup> Rana, S. (2008). From Making Money Without Doing Evil to Doing Good Without Handouts: The Google.Org Experiment in Philanthropy. *Journal of Business & Technology Law*, Vol. 3(1): 92; Boss, Do No Evil, 3.

<sup>76</sup> Interview conducted February 10, 2020.

<sup>77</sup> This is a pseudonym. All other names in this paper are not anonymized because their speeches and statements are publicly available.

philanthropy, he explained, referred to money in the form of grants and cash donations. Besides the donations made through Impact Challenges, Google.org regularly donates money to nonprofits and aid organizations. For example, during the early COVID-19 pandemic, Google.org reports to have committed \$100 million in grants.<sup>78</sup> Sometimes donations from Google.org are offered as part of a partnership with a humanitarian organization, while other large donations are matching campaigns in which Google.org matches the donations made by individuals or employees. The company has a gift matching program through which employee donations for selected causes up to \$10,000 will be matched 1:1 by Google.org.

The matching program also includes volunteer hours, which is the type of donations referred to as “people” by Martin, the second bucket of their engagement typology. Google employees can choose to volunteer for nonprofit organizations that Google.org partners with and according to Martin, employees are often the ones to initiate this volunteer work.<sup>79</sup> In some cases, Google.org will match the volunteer hours with a donation of \$10 per volunteer hour to the nonprofit. But Google.org also uses volunteers and pro bono work more strategically in their philanthropic model, where fixed amounts of volunteer hours referred to as technical support or expertise is coupled with funding as part of donation “packages.”<sup>80</sup>

The third bucket of Google.org’s engagement is about its products. Google.org donates products and advertisement space to nonprofits for a variety of causes. For example, in 2016 Google.org announced that it would donate 25,000 computers to refugees fleeing Syria.<sup>81</sup> The number of laptops they did donate, however, is not publicly known. In addition to donating their own products, Google.org engages in partnerships with aid organizations and nonprofits to adapt and modify Google technologies to address social challenges.<sup>82</sup> During an interview, Martin stated that what matters most in measuring the impact of their philanthropy was whether this impact could be connected directly to their products. Thus, an important task of Google.org as the philanthropic arm of Google was to find areas where Google products could be implemented “for good:”

So, where my team then comes in is, how can I amplify or spread, or whatever the verb you want to use, the benefits that are being created by this cutting-edge technology that

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<sup>78</sup> Google.org (2020). *COVID-19 Response*. <https://www.google.org/covid-19/> (Accessed 4 January 2022).

<sup>79</sup> Interview conducted February 10, 2020.

<sup>80</sup> Google.org (2021). *Opportunities*. <https://www.google.org/opportunities/> (Accessed 4 January 2022).

<sup>81</sup> Walker, J. (2016). Google Donates Chromebooks to Refugees. *Business Insider*, <https://www.businessinsider.com/google-donates-chromebooks-to-refugees-2016-1>.

<sup>82</sup> Google.org, *Our Work*.

our research team has built? And then, can this be leveraged by nonprofits to do a lot of work that they are already doing on the ground?

According to Martin, this meant assessing first if “there is an area where our products already are doing some interesting work that the benefits of which need to be amplified or could be amplified and have some differential impact on a vulnerable population.”<sup>83</sup> This strategy of using Google products and technologies to “amplify” and create impact was described as a way to add more value in humanitarian crises:

We have been discussing and assessing in what ways Google can support and be uniquely helpful and have added value instead of just adding to the noise of problems and situations in crises... And where do we have the skillsets or the assets that we might be able to uniquely leverage in a situation, above and beyond writing checks? I think the last thing my organization wants me to do is just write a big check to a big organization and pat ourselves on the back that we did what we had to do and then move on.

As seen here, Google’s philanthropic vision is bound up with corporate ambitions of using Google products to have a unique impact on the world. Thus, these diversified philanthropic efforts are grounded in a belief that Google’s most valuable contribution to society is their products and expertise, rather than their wealth. These ambitions align with the company’s long held and publicly declared identity as a company aspiring to “make the world a better place”<sup>84</sup> and the founders’ proclaimed intention to never become “a conventional company.”<sup>85</sup> The structural configurations of Google.org reflect these ambitions too. In contrast to traditional corporate foundations such as the Gates Foundation, which is a separate legal entity from Microsoft, Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin created Google.org in 2005 as a hybrid fund within the company as an experiment in “for-profit philanthropy.”<sup>86</sup> The founders sought to use their hybrid model to do things “that other people aren’t doing,”<sup>87</sup> and the current president of Google.org, Jacqueline Fuller, stated in 2010 that “we want people to

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<sup>83</sup> Quotes from interview conducted February 10, 2020.

<sup>84</sup> Rana, From Making Money Without Doing Evil to Doing Good Without Handouts: The Google.Org Experiment in Philanthropy, 87.

<sup>85</sup> Solomon, L. D. (2009). Sergey Brin, Larry Page, and Google.Org: The Corporation as Philanthropist. In: *Tech Billionaires: Reshaping Philanthropy in a Quest for a Better World*. New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 107.

<sup>86</sup> Rana, From Making Money Without Doing Evil to Doing Good Without Handouts: The Google.Org Experiment in Philanthropy, 91–92.

<sup>87</sup> Rana, 88.



look at what we are doing and say, ‘Wow, only Google could have done something like that.’”<sup>88</sup> Thus, Google’s philanthropic model links a desire to solidify the company’s market position and to manifest its founders and employees’ perception of the company as an innovative and original technology powerhouse.

The main innovation in the Google.org model is often believed to be its for-profit status and “its ability to incorporate business principles in the pursuit of philanthropic aims.”<sup>89</sup> This model has been creatively labeled “entrepreneurial philanthropy,” “venture philanthropy,” “innovative philanthropy,” “for-profit charity,” “compassionate capitalism,” and “philanthropreneurship.”<sup>90</sup> But many for-profit businesses include a charitable aspect in their business practices, illustrated in Brand Aid examples such as Toms Shoes,<sup>91</sup> and new varieties of “doing good and doing well” are constantly emerging, increasingly collapsing the realms of nonprofit and for-profit.<sup>92</sup> The incorporation of entrepreneurship in philanthropy is also not new, and critics call the Google.org model merely “the most recent incarnation of a longstanding entrepreneurial streak in the realm of philanthropy.”<sup>93</sup> Thus, despite Google’s attempt to present their for-profit philanthropic model as innovative, the merging of for-profit interests with charitable activities is not particularly novel. What is unusual about the model, however, is the way it situates Google.org between regulatory frameworks allowing Google to evade constraints that regulate traditional foundations and nonprofits. For example, Google.org can invest in for-profit companies and channel the profits back into Google.org. As such, Google is not limited to supporting certain charitable causes as nonprofits usually are and the company can decide more freely which causes count as “doing good.”<sup>94</sup> Google.org is allowed to lobby, develop products, hire consultants, and is not obliged to disclose spending publicly. Consequently, it is not possible to find exact records of the spending of Google.org, which as pointed out by Boss,<sup>95</sup> is ironic for a company “whose mission is to organize the world’s information.” The hybrid model enables Google to avoid legal and structural

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<sup>88</sup> Boss, *Do No Evil*, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Rana, 90.

<sup>90</sup> Rana, 90.

<sup>91</sup> Richey, L.A. and Ponte, S. (2011). *Brand Aid: Shopping Well to Save the World*.

<sup>92</sup> Richey, L.A., Hawkins, R. and Goodman, M. K. (2021). Why Are Humanitarian Sentiments Profitable and What Does This Mean for Global Development? *World Development*, Vol. 145, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105537>; Olwig, M. F. (2021). Introduction: Commodifying Humanitarian Sentiments? The Black Box of the for-Profit and Non-Profit Partnership.

<sup>93</sup> Rana, *From Making Money Without Doing Evil to Doing Good Without Handouts: The Google.Org Experiment in Philanthropy*, 90; McGoey, *No Such Thing as a Free Gift: The Gates Foundation and the Price of Philanthropy*.

<sup>94</sup> Solomon, Sergey Brin, Larry Page, and Google.Org: The Corporation as Philanthropist, 112.

<sup>95</sup> Boss, *Do No Evil*, 11.

regulations in place for nonprofits, but also market-based accountability structures in place for for-profit businesses.<sup>96</sup> This “regulatory straddling” has been highlighted as a key corporate strategy for platform companies like Google to sustain their economic and political power in global markets.<sup>97</sup>

As this section has demonstrated, Google’s philanthropic model is constructed to highlight the public and humanitarian value of Google products and expertise over the value of the company’s wealth. By focusing on the potential humanitarian value of Google’s products, the disadvantages of concentrating wealth and power in very few companies is moved to the background of the narrative. Google markets this model as innovate because it combines philanthropy with for-profit activities, but philanthropy has always been intertwined with for-profit interests and business approaches.<sup>98</sup> Google.org, then, extends these ties while providing a corporate structure that evades regulation. Furthermore, by organizing their philanthropy into challenges through which organizations compete for funding, Google is able to shape these organizations’ “good doing” to fit the specific uses of AI that are most likely to use Google’s products, which we examine in more detail below. Here we turn to Google’s Impact Challenges through which the company enacts its philanthropic vision of using Google technology “for good.”

### **Google’s Impact Challenges**

Through regional and global Impact Challenges, Google.org provides grants to nonprofits and social enterprises with “the best and boldest ideas”<sup>99</sup> for how to solve a specified issue with digital technology. Every Impact Challenge is organized around a new issue and geographical scope determined by Google.org. The first Impact Challenge was held in the UK in 2013, under the name “a better world faster.”<sup>100</sup> Since then, 40 Impact Challenges have been launched, most recently the Google.org Impact Challenge for Women and Girls. Selected organizations are awarded “a strategic package of funding, mentorship, and technical support”<sup>101</sup> for up to three years. As such, the Impact Challenges embody our respondent, Martin’s, characterization of Google’s “three buckets” approach to philanthropy.

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<sup>96</sup> Rana, *From Making Money Without Doing Evil to Doing Good Without Handouts: The Google.Org Experiment in Philanthropy*, 93–94.

<sup>97</sup> Atal, *The Janus Faces of Silicon Valley*.

<sup>98</sup> McGoey, *No Such Thing as a Free Gift: The Gates Foundation and the Price of Philanthropy*, 15–17.

<sup>99</sup> Google.org, *Opportunities*.

<sup>100</sup> Google.org (2013). *Google.Org Impact Challenge UK 2013*, <https://impactchallenge.withgoogle.com/uk2013> (Accessed 4 January 2022).

<sup>101</sup> Google.org, *Opportunities*.

The AI Impact Challenge Summit that the first author attended in 2020 was organized to gather and present the 20 technology projects that had been awarded a grant in what totaled \$25 million spent by the Impact Challenge to apply AI for social good.<sup>102</sup> In the call for applications, Jacqueline Fuller specified that the company was looking for organizations using AI to help address social, humanitarian and environmental problems.<sup>103</sup> The applications were assessed on five criteria: impact, feasibility, use of AI, scalability and responsibility. For example, applications were judged on whether or not they demonstrated a “clear plan to deploy the AI model for real-world impact.”<sup>104</sup> According to Google’s own report, the particular AI capabilities and techniques that the applicant population planned to use, if granted Google funding, ranged from computer vision (41% referenced this), to machine learning, structured deep learning and natural language processing.<sup>105</sup> Most of the applications were addressing issues in the field of health (25% of all applications), followed by the environment, education, economic empowerment, equality and inclusion, crisis response and public and social sector management.<sup>106</sup> The report also clarifies the “insight” that “data accessibility challenges vary by sector” or, to connect these, that applications working on health and education were more likely to have access to the data necessary for using the AI, while other areas were not: “Applicants in the crisis response, economic empowerment, and equality and inclusion categories were likely to lack meaningful datasets.”<sup>107</sup> How much benefit – or impact – can AI technologies offer in areas where the necessary data for using it are lacking?

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<sup>102</sup> AI technology was applied in various ways in the 20 winning projects. For example, the Médecins Sans Frontières Foundation developed AI image recognition technology to analyze infections and prescribe the right antibiotics. The organization Crisis Text Line, Inc used AI technology to better allocate the organization’s counselors to people in crisis, who requested help via text messages. Researchers from Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, won a grant from Google.org to apply AI to analyze and monitor air quality data in order to forecast spikes in air pollution. The panel of experts tasked with reviewing these applications included three Google employees, representatives from Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank Group, two tech company founders, two technology researchers and the actress Geena Davis. This expert panel reviewed 2602 applicants from 119 countries.

<sup>103</sup> Fuller, J. (2019). Google AI Impact Challenge: A Week to Apply, plus Research on Why You Should. *The Keyword* (Google.org Blog), <https://www.blog.google/outreach-initiatives/google-org/google-ai-impact-challenge-week-apply-plus-research-why-you-should/>.

<sup>104</sup> Google.org (2018). *Impact Challenge 2018 – Google AI*, <https://ai.google/social-good/impact-challenge/application/> (Accessed 4 January 2022).

<sup>105</sup> Google.org (2020). *Accelerating Social Good with Artificial Intelligence: Insights from the Google AI Impact Challenge*, pp. 7, 8.

<sup>106</sup> Google.org, *Accelerating Social Good with Artificial Intelligence: Insights from the Google AI Impact Challenge*.

<sup>107</sup> Google.org, 16.

Yet, in line with their strategy to focus on areas where Google’s technology is already making an impact, the AI Impact Challenge was used to market existing technologies and the experts already trained to use them. For example, Google.org reports that “more than 70% of submissions, across all sectors and organization types, relied on existing AI frameworks (e.g. Caffe, cuDNN, TensorFlow, PyTorch).”<sup>108</sup> Also, less publicly promoted, but available in their insights report is the fact that four countries dominated the application process by submitting more than 100 proposals each: Canada, India, UK and US (one third of all applications were from Americans). These are all English language, tech dominant countries, as the call for proposals was only issued in English and relied on network sharing for dissemination.<sup>109</sup> Also interesting is the fact that half of the applicants overall (not those funded) reported as having no prior experience with AI. Through the application process, Google thus found a large market of nascent “unmet need” for their technological support and products, while presenting these products in the context in which they appear as having the most impact. In the executive summary of Google’s report, they spell it out like this: “As more social sector organizations recognize AI’s potential, we all gain more high-impact opportunities to strengthen the emerging ecosystem.”<sup>110</sup> But who exactly is the “we all” who “gain” from these philanthropic endeavors? In the following section, we examine such “win-win” claims of AI through Google’s use of the phrase “AI for social good.”

### **AI For Social Good: Risk-Taking and Acceleration**

“AI for social good” is a term used in the tech field to describe the application of AI technologies (such as machine learning and algorithmic systems) to areas where they claim to have societal benefits.<sup>111</sup> What exactly constitutes “AI” or “social good” within this term, varies greatly and “AI for social good” has therefore become a popular expression for anything related to the speculated benefits of big data or data science for issues of social responsibility, social impacts, public good, development, humanitarianism and more.<sup>112</sup> “AI for social good” as a movement has travelled from tech communities, to global conferences, university departments and corporate social responsibility programs, gaining popularity and

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<sup>108</sup> Google.org, 18.

<sup>109</sup> Google.org, 7.

<sup>110</sup> Google.org, 2.

<sup>111</sup> Madianou, Nonhuman Humanitarianism: When ‘AI for Good’ Can Be Harmful, 851.

<sup>112</sup> Moore, J. (2019). AI for Not Bad. *Frontiers in Big Data*, Vol. 2, September: 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fdata.2019.00032>.

shifting definitions along the way.<sup>113</sup> The term is connected to the broader movement and phenomenon of “tech for good,”<sup>114</sup> an equally elusive term. While it is sometimes used to describe a movement among IT programmers to use their coding skills to solve social problems,<sup>115</sup> the term is also used as a stand-in term for social enterprises in the tech sector<sup>116</sup> and in global summits focusing on mitigating the risks and harms of digital technology.<sup>117</sup> In the field of corporate philanthropy analyzed in this paper, “AI for social good” and “tech for good” are generally used to describe philanthropic activities where technology corporations support social, environmental, and humanitarian causes not just by donating funds but also, importantly, by applying their business expertise and products. As such, the AI Impact Challenge summit exemplifies the philanthropic practices of the “AI for social good” space. In this section, we highlight how the potential and “win-winism” of AI was promoted at the summit through notions of risk and speed.

In her keynote speech at the summit, Jacquelline Fuller emphasized with excitement the social aspirations attached to AI. “So why am I so excited? Why do I think this has so much potential?” Fuller asked rhetorically, from the stage in the auditorium. “Really, it is all about the power of AI. You know, Sundar, our CEO, has said Google is going to be an AI first company.” The enormous screens behind her presented visual illustrations of AI technologies as she was talking. “He is going to bet the company on the power of AI. And we have seen it transform our business, it is helping make Gmail secure, it is helping you find that photo you want from Google Photos. It is doing amazing things. In fact, Sundar even said it could be as transformative as electricity.” In this aspirational talk, we hear the risk-taking that is characteristic of tech philanthropy: the CEO is going to bet the company on AI, and the philanthropic work will be part of this gamble. In her speech, Fuller continued, “So, at Google.org we ask ourselves: How do we ensure that the benefits of technology, especially advanced technology like AI, is being brought to bear on the problems that really matter the most for humanity? Issues like climate change and poverty and gender inequality and mental health. Because we believe that everyone, everywhere, should benefit from the advances of

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<sup>113</sup> Moore.

<sup>114</sup> Madianou, Nonhuman Humanitarianism: When ‘AI for Good’ Can Be Harmful, 851.

<sup>115</sup> Roberson, J. (2018). What Is Tech for Good? *Hacker Noon*, <https://hackernoon.com/what-is-tech-for-good-533c65b73e72>.

<sup>116</sup> Hull, R. and Berry, R. (2016). The Social Entrepreneurship Option for Scientists and Engineers. In: R. Bhamidimarri and A. Liu, eds., *Engineering and Enterprise*, Springer International Publishing, pp. 27–44; Bughin et al., Tech for Good Smoothing Disruption, Improving Well-Being.

<sup>117</sup> Dillet, R. (2018). 50 Tech CEOs Come to Paris to Talk about Tech for Good. *TechCrunch*, <https://techcrunch.com/2018/05/23/50-tech-ceos-come-to-paris-to-talk-about-tech-for-good/>.

technology.” She slowed down her speech to emphasize each sentence and shook her head as she proclaimed: “Not just businesses. Not just the rich. Everyone.”<sup>118</sup>

The rhetorical use of universalizing and inclusive language of “everyone,” “everywhere,” without any actual specificity of “anyone” existing “anywhere” in space or time, allows the audience to dream along with Google in the world of ideals, uncomplicated by the banalities of tax evasion, anti-trust laws or Co2 emission levels. Furthermore, the belief that “everyone, everywhere should benefit from the advances of technology” is a statement that works as the archetypical example from *Animal Farm*: “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.” Orwell’s pigs distort the logic and use of language in which “equal” no longer means that all animals are equal to other animals. Instead, it is used in a way that sounds linguistically correct, but completely changes the meaning of the term. When “equal” is used as a relative term instead of an absolute term, then some animals can become more equal than others. In the discursive set-up of the AI Impact Challenge summit, we see similar linguistic moves that produce the feelings of consensual movement toward a common goal but have the effect of obfuscating power asymmetries. The “should benefit” is an aspirational statement linking a possibly positive future, a hypothetical notion, to the idea that technology *will* advance, an empirical fact. The entire stage for the “AI for social good” discourse that follows is that technology will advance as a fact outside of the politics and choices of agents necessary for making this happen. Thus, relevant discussions are limited to those around how to best implement an agreed upon normative value around benefits. It is not clear if these benefits are already existing and need to be noticed and celebrated; if they are somehow “stuck” in spaces or groups of people and thus need to be spread out to others; if they are nascent and need a combination of time and inputs to naturally grow and spread. The possibilities for these benefits are almost endless. However, the place where they end is with any discussion of associated costs. The costs of tech philanthropy are not part of the “win-winism” of the AI Impact Challenge summit, except when they can be used to construct a context of “risk.” Precisely notions of risk and speed, or acceleration as it was phrased at the summit, were repeatedly used to construct AI and Google’s AI philanthropy as particularly potent for doing good, as we highlight below.

The Silicon Valley tech sector’s willingness to take risks and to move quicker than usual in the nonprofit sector was a consistent underlying theme of the summit. In the

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<sup>118</sup> Quotes from summit. Based on fieldnotes and the recording of Fuller’s speech, which can be found

introduction of the summit, the Head of Product Impact at Google.org, Brigitte Gosselink, was escorted onto the stage. The setup was incredibly organized. The screen was huge on stage; there were lighting and video crews and a stage manager with a headset on, standing at the foot of the stairs leading to the stage, who was responsible for sending people up on stage when it was their turn to speak. The whole setup was like attending the filming of a TED talk.<sup>119</sup> In her speech, Brigitte Gosselink offered an invitation for the audience. “Let us embrace the potential.” She extended her arms out wide towards the audience and said:

You’re hopefully all here because you likely believe in a potential of AI to benefit society. But you also may be sitting here with a healthy dose of skepticism. And I personally share that in many ways. I tend to be a skeptic myself, so I respect where you are coming from. But when we need to be clear-eyed about the potential risks of AI, and skeptical of grandiose statements that can solve all our problems, we also need to embrace the opportunity that presents and I think if we do not, we may be missing out on some real potential impact in the world that would not otherwise be possible.<sup>120</sup>

Here, Gosselink sets the ground rules about participation in “AI for social good:” You are here with a belief in the potential of AI to benefit society. We will not talk about costs, trade-offs, or politics, but will use the concept of risk-taking to highlight the value of what corporations can bring to philanthropic helping. In this way, risks were also understood as part of making an impact. Taking risks and betting on potentially risky technology was presented as necessary to do good in meaningful ways.

Related to this emphasis on risk-taking is the common theme that Google products can accelerate social change faster, which is coupled with the urgency of the issues tackled by “AI for social good.” Later in the summit program, four women went on stage for a panel discussion on responsible use of AI technology. One of the women acted as chair, and the other three represented each their nonprofit organization. They all sat on a row facing the audience and took turns sharing their perspectives on responsibility in using AI. Nancy, a representative of the nonprofit Crisis Text Line, sat at the end of the row. She wore big glasses with a red frame and a black and white patterned blazer. She spoke energetically and with enthusiasm about how her organization was using AI to communicate with vulnerable young

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<sup>119</sup> Fieldnotes by first author, February 13, 2020.

<sup>120</sup> Quotes from summit. Based on fieldnotes and the “Google AI Impact Challenge Summit Welcome Remarks” video available online [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf3YvXJvXv0&ab_channel=Google.org): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf3YvXJvXv0&ab\\_channel=Google.org](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf3YvXJvXv0&ab_channel=Google.org) (Accessed 4 January 2022).

people. “I am going to say something now not predictable and maybe a little bit surprising” she declared, turning her face to the audience:

I think people think that social change organizations should go slow and carefully and that the whole mantra out there of like ‘move faster and break things’ should not be applied to our organizations because the work that we do is so precious. And so, what I am going to say to that is “fuck that!” We should actually move fastest.

Her fellow panelists smiled and applause from the audience followed. “These are the world’s biggest problems; we deserve the best technology and the best people.”<sup>121</sup> These repeated references to the urgent need for rapid and risky philanthropic action constructed the discursive links between AI and social good. The logic that these notions appeared to follow was: Yes, AI is controversial in ways of which we should be skeptical, but we *need* to take risks. Yes, the tech sector can move too fast and “break things,” but we *need* to accelerate. The urgency of addressing society’s most pressing problems,<sup>122</sup> which governments and nonprofits were not fast or risk-inclined enough to tackle on their own, established the need for AI technology in doing good.

As these ethnographic data show, tech philanthropy relies upon an assumption of risk that is too high for public sector and government investment but provides an opportunity for companies like Google, known for a culture of risk-taking. In her keynote speech, Fuller shared a story:

Last night I was talking to the Quills folks [one of the winning projects], and they were saying “thank you so much for funding us because nobody would fund this idea. It is so risky.” And that is the concept of philanthropic capital, right? We should be risk capital. We should be investing in ideas that are not right for government, where there is a market failure.

Presenting tech philanthropy as an investment of risk capital underlines an important aspect of how capitalism and humanitarianism are intertwined in these initiatives. By propagating the “big-risk-big-reward” ethos, characteristic of the tech sector and start up culture,<sup>123</sup> Google

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<sup>121</sup> Quotes from summit. Based on fieldnotes and the “Google AI Impact Summit Highlights” video available online [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPhPYsdgOt0): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPhPYsdgOt0> (Accessed 4 January 2022).

<sup>122</sup> Google.org, *Accelerating Social Good with Artificial Intelligence: Insights from the Google AI Impact Challenge*.

<sup>123</sup> Heller, N. (2020). Is Venture Capital Worth the Risk? *The New Yorker*, January 20, p. 1–8.



equates philanthropy to venture capitalism and approaches humanitarian crises as gaps in the market and opportunities for investments. Similar to venture capitalism, which was an essential force in Google's rise to the top of the corporate world, Google's philanthropy is about dreaming big and placing numerous unsuccessful bets in the search for that one big break. Thus, Google's philanthropy and their Impact Challenges center on finding the "right" problems to solve, or in other words, the problems that will bring about the biggest reward. We discuss this in the following section.

### **Solutions Looking for Problems**

The Google.org president and other employees highlighted repeatedly that AI is not always the solution. In her keynote speech at the summit, Fuller noted: "Even though AI is growing more accessible, machine learning is not always the right answer. It might be a little surprising to hear that from Google, but it was really one of the most important takeaways that we saw." In fact, the first "insight" reported from the Google.org application review was "Machine learning is not always the right answer."<sup>124</sup> Interestingly, the important missing piece of information is whether or not the applications that led Google to this insight and to gain a more grounded understanding of the limitations of its scope for doing good were actually given any funding. There is no reason to think that they might have been. Furthermore, the unmet need to "pressure test whether there is faster, simpler or cheaper alternative" to the proposed intervention with AI, is highlighted as part of a market for technical help.<sup>125</sup>

Brigitte Gosselink echoed this notion when she, in her introduction to the summit, invited the audience to "dig into the details" of AI: "There is a lot of hype about AI these days and we really hope that we will be able to go beyond an abstract conversation to really understand, what do we mean by AI? What do we mean by social good?"<sup>126</sup> she asked from the stage in the auditorium. Drawing on recent work from scholars of humanitarian technology and innovation, important questions to ask of this case are: Will what we mean by "social good" be constituted within the limits of what AI can and cannot do? If this is the case for a corporate giant like Google, will it also impact other forms of philanthropy? These questions are important to address in a context of tech philanthropy, which has been critiqued for its

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<sup>124</sup> Google.org, *Accelerating Social Good with Artificial Intelligence: Insights from the Google AI Impact Challenge*, 13.

<sup>125</sup> Google.org, 15.

<sup>126</sup> Quote from the summit. Based on fieldnotes and the recording of Gosselink's speech "Google AI Impact Challenge Summit Welcome Remarks," available online [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf3YvXJvXv0&ab_channel=Google.org): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf3YvXJvXv0&ab\\_channel=Google.org](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf3YvXJvXv0&ab_channel=Google.org).

technological optimism and “solutionism” – a tendency to produce solutions looking for problems.<sup>127</sup> What problems, then, are these philanthropic tech solutions looking for? During the summit, this tendency was visible in conversations among participants, as illustrated in fieldnotes from the event:

In the lunch break, I brought my plate outside to the courtyard, where groups of people were settling around tables in the sun. I sat down at a table with two young women each working for a tech company. They started catching up, talking about their common work relations and the work they were each currently doing in their company’s social impact departments. One of them asked the other: “Did you guys do something with the corona virus?” “No, but we did do something for the Australian wildfires” the other responded.<sup>128</sup>

From a global pandemic to a natural disaster, “tech for good” can provide the philanthropic solution, as long as the intervention needed is technical, potentially profitable, and not political. The Google.org employee Martin expressed a similar view, as he explained how Google’s “three buckets” approach of philanthropy, people, and products replaced an earlier approach of merely donating money. He said:

A big natural disaster would hit, and we would write a check and move on. And I think we are trying to think a bit more strategically about how we can drive the most impact we can, dollar for dollar and hour for hour or of our volunteers’ time...Thinking through the lens of natural disasters for a second, or knowing that protracted conflict can continue to exaggerate at a pace that we are not comfortable with, more work needs to be done on the preparedness and resilience building side... I can imagine there being a project in the future that we do to help support building hospital capacity for future pandemics. I am just spit balling right now, but knowing the trends of some of these crises and where we would probably drive the most value and have the largest impact, is probably investing ahead of time.

Here Martin describes both the synergistic imaginary of tech philanthropy in which “driving the most value” and “having the largest impact” is made possible by a context of predictable,

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<sup>127</sup> Sandvik, K. B. (2017). Now Is the Time to Deliver: Looking for Humanitarian Innovation’s Theory of Change. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, Vol. 2(1): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-017-0023-2>; Morozov, E. (2020). The Tech ‘Solutions’ for Coronavirus Take the Surveillance State to the next Level. *The Guardian*, April 15.

<sup>128</sup> Fieldnotes from summit, February 13, 2020.

linear, and most importantly, apolitical crisis spaces. In another keynote talk from the summit, Yossi Matias, Vice President of Search & AI at Google, discusses examples of “AI for social good applications and his view on the direction of the field.”<sup>129</sup> As described in the official video from his talk: “Matias runs Google’s R&D center in Israel and is a founding executive sponsor for the AI for Social Good Program and for the Launchpad Accelerator Program of which this program is a part.” In his speech, as he describes what he terms a personal lens on “how to use technology to help people during crisis,” an image is projected of a city skyline with a huge fire in the distance. He tells the audience that this is a picture he took with his phone from his office in Haifa, Israel. The image has immediate resonance with many similar images that abound in the international news, reporting bombings and explosions in the area. He describes it as a big fire in the Carmel mountains, and he was looking on the internet to find out, as he described it, “what’s going on?” and “should I evacuate the office?” and “who’s at risk?” He goes on to show the history of Google searches at that time to demonstrate how many others were also seeing the same flames and looking for information, noting how one Google engineer was literally “coding under fire.” But the expected story of violent political clashes in Israel and occupied Palestinian territories is never told. Instead, a completely different type of fire emerges, the kind we would term a “natural disaster.” He shows the use of Google technology during the Chennai Floods, Superstorm Sandy, and the Paris Attacks.<sup>130</sup> He then goes on to point out the gaps they have found around the lack of information around floods. The keynote exemplified the types of AI that Google teams use to solve problems of “flood forecasting, preventing overfishing, diagnosing diabetic retinopathy, and predicting earthquake aftershocks,” all illustrated by icons on screen. This speech by a man viewing a fire from his office in Israel epitomizes how important it is to naturalize the idea of a humanitarian disaster. To engage the “tech for good” community, there must be a “real” need, unlike a politically made problem, which would be someone's fault and they should be held accountable to sort it out. Interestingly, the first public comment on YouTube when viewing the video is “coincidence that this video ranks first when searching for ‘social good’?” bringing a striking lay critique, perhaps inspired by intellectuals like Zuboff and Morozov, to the fundamental questions of tech philanthropy. How is philanthropic work providing marketing content for big-tech companies that are able to use this both to shape the

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<sup>129</sup> Google.org (2020). *Keynote: AI for Social Good*. Youtube, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMJKKqI0MqU&list=RDCMUFCJcu7Lj\\_qmYuPhMAerryUA&index=18](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMJKKqI0MqU&list=RDCMUFCJcu7Lj_qmYuPhMAerryUA&index=18) (Accessed 4 January 2022).

<sup>130</sup> Interestingly this is the only example of a political disaster, with the attacks attributed to the Islamic state, but it is not mentioned in the presentation, only shown as a comparative example.

understandings of what “tech for good” should do, but also of what kinds of problems are worth solving?

## Conclusions

In recent work on the merge of digital technology, humanitarianism and capitalism, scholars present the idea that the introduction of digital technologies in humanitarian work has opened the humanitarian domain to new capitalist logics<sup>131</sup> and new corporate actors.<sup>132</sup> Thus, the use of digital technology is presented as a cause of, or at least occurring prior to, the increased corporate engagement in humanitarian work. However, following the argument of Morozov and others on digital capitalism, one could argue that “the same old” structural links between capitalism and humanitarianism and their common imperatives have led to the expansion of humanitarian practice to include digital technology and technology companies. Rather than perceiving tech sector philanthropic engagement as a transformation of the ways in which capitalist and humanitarian logics intersect, should we instead approach it as simply the most recent manifestation of a long-standing convergence between capitalism and humanitarianism? And if so, what do the particular forms of care propagated by Google’s philanthropy tell us about the contemporary relationship between humanitarianism and capitalism?

Through its tech philanthropy, Google creates a world where the most pressing global problems are solved by the successful applicants to its AI Impact Challenge – “partnerships between nonprofits with deep sector expertise and academic institutions or technology companies with the technical ability to shape and execute the AI portion of the project.”<sup>133</sup> The role of governments is reduced to the obscuring delineation of policy makers as Google expands on its insights into “where to start” kinds of prescriptions. The explicit mention of governments is to act as a “role model for responsibly embracing AI.”<sup>134</sup> Thus, governments are not to regulate or to push away the products and services offered by Google. Additionally, in a very small section of the appendix to the Google.org report, they even suggest that subsidies should be offered to support investment in the physical infrastructure supporting AI,

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<sup>131</sup> Burns, R. (2019). New Frontiers of Philanthro-Capitalism: Digital Technologies and Humanitarianism. *Antipode*, Vol. 51(4): 1101–22, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12534>.

<sup>132</sup> Duffield, M. (2016). The Resilience of the Ruins: Towards a Critique of Digital Humanitarianism. *Resilience*, Vol. 4(3): 153, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21693293.2016.1153772>.

<sup>133</sup> Google.org, *Accelerating Social Good with Artificial Intelligence: Insights from the Google AI Impact Challenge*, 22.

<sup>134</sup> Google.org, 50.

discounts on electricity and more flexible rules around data localization. These are highly politicized arenas where Google is currently embedded in ongoing legal and regulatory struggles with governments.<sup>135</sup> Yet, Google’s “hands-off AI” suggestions are presented as ways to “support AI for social good,” a clear illustration of the entanglements of philanthropy and capitalism.

Returning to The Grove, the room of “AI for social good” enthusiasts that most excited Google.org’s president where we began this paper sets the stage for our conclusions. Like the evolving humanitarian space around AI for social good, The Redwood Wars of the 1990s also had a complicated politics pitting humans against each other over their relationship to non-human objects of great significance. The results of the protests, tree-spiking, pipe-bombing, sit-ins, fistfights, marches, lawsuits, and legislation were mixed. In his book, *Defending Giants*, Speece argues that one of the longer-term impacts was an erosion of corporate power in managing the environment resulting from extremely effective litigation at all levels of the judiciary. Another impact, however, was a shift in the relations of power over environmental governance from the democratically elected Congress to the executive branch of government. The great diversity in the environmental movement was united against concentrated corporate power. To understand the diversity, possibilities, and limitations in the tech for good movement, public anthropology with an attention to the power dynamics of digital capitalism is needed. Our analysis here suggests limited opportunities for uniting against corporate power in humanitarian AI, as the corporation itself defines the goals and outcomes of the tech for good space. Our findings echo Dauvergne’s political economy analysis of AI for environmental sustainability: “when all is said and done, eco-business is not endeavoring to advance social justice or to protect the earth but is aiming to expand markets, sales and corporate power.”<sup>136</sup> In sum, our study of Google’s AI Impact Challenge suggests that this relationship between tech for good and tech for profit, between philanthropy and capitalism, is becoming increasingly indistinguishable.

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<sup>135</sup> In the face-off between big tech and parts of the US government, the magnitude of the lobbying power of Google has come into stark display as they have given money to all of the organizations and political figures who are speaking out in their support. The co-sponsor of bills to limit Google and other big tech said the lobbying is “making our case that they have way too much power in terms of monopoly power and in terms of money and politics.” Cecilia Kang, C., McCabe, D. and Vogel, K. (2021). Tech Giants, Fearful of Proposals to Curb Them, Blitz Washington With Lobbying. *The New York Times*, June 22.

<sup>136</sup> Dauvergne, *AI in the Wild: Sustainability in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, 15.