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symposium — booklet

WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN DESIGN ?

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Bridging Conceptual Thinking with political Practice Under Conditions of Uncertainty

Humanitarian design reflects an entanglement of politics with digital, material, and technological ecologies, exploring how emerging technologies, aesthetic design, and engineering insights can be combined with knowledge from human sciences to tackle humanitarian crises. While bridging conceptual thinking with political practice and to consider all kinds of ecologies to achieve individual policies is important, it is likewise important that humanitarian design is based on appropriate understandings of acting in this world. This can be achieved only if and when our experiences of the world in which we act matches our modes of understanding and analyses ("designs") of this world; put differently, ontology (as the symbolisation of our experiences) must match epistemology (as the way in which we produce knowledge about and analyse these experiences). This ontology-epistemology coherence is crucial for developing norms to act in this world. If and when this coherence (as "ontological ought" [Hans Jonas]) is not achieved, policy development is like "nailing the putting to the wall" (Paul Feyerabend), e.g., in the most aporetic case (as in rationalist policy planning) the attempt to analyse and to act in a non-linear world (i.e., the world of crises) with and based upon linear models (like resilience). We must close a/the ontology-epistemology-practice gap for meaningful policy development. The paper suggests an ethics of self-restraint and the concluding politics of reversibility to close this gap and contribute to the theory-practice relation in a non-linear world of crises for humanitarian politics. Reversibility proceeds from an ethics of self-restraint to an action(able) norm through embracing the ought of a temporalized, non-linear ontology (that is the only way that appears appropriate to conceive of an uncertain world of humanitarian crises).

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Hartmut Behr, MA and PhD in Political Philosophy (University of Cologne), is Professor of International Politics at Newcastle University (UK) since 2005. Before coming to the UK, he studied and taught in Germany, the US, Japan, and France. His main research and teaching areas are International Political Theory and Sociology of IR, Peace and Conflict Studies, and Political Ethics. He published many articles on these topics and is the author of three monographs in English (*A History of International Political Theory*, 2010; *Politics of Difference*, 2014; and *Reversibility – Politics Under Conditions of Uncertainty*, forthcoming 2024).

Humanitarian Design and "The Real Problem" in Times of Poly and Permacrises

Humanitarian design can be used to describe the process of designing products, services or systems for populations affected by natural and/or human-made disasters. Furthermore, the acknowledgement that all people are entitled to be treated equally and to be protected in times of war and disaster, is key to understanding the efforts of humanitarian actors including humanitarian design. In 2024 we live in a world where disasters are screaming for attention, and where terms as polycrisis and permacrisis take over from other terms. The current terminology creates overwhelming narratives in which it can be difficult to focus on the core of design; for example sensemaking and the identification of "real problems".

In my presentation I would like to focus on two things: first, the six paradoxes of humanitarian design as published in the Handbook of Sustainable Design second edition. The new edition explains how the six paradoxes are:

- The environmental paradox
- The short term thinking paradox
- The self-reliance paradox
- The multiple-agenda paradox
- The scalability paradox
- The technology paradox

Secondly, I would like to present the work to establish a curriculum on humanitarian design and innovation at NTNU, how students have reacted, and the first lessons learned from this process. Finally, I would like to reflect upon how designers can find a stronger and more visible voice in humanitarian relief and development.

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Brita Fladvad Nielsen is an associate professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Since 2006 she has been working on humanitarian design in product, service, systems and policy design through practice and research, alongside tackling complexity related to energy access in humanitarian settings but also urban contexts globally and in Norway. She has also been participating expert panel for evaluation of funding for Innovation Norway's Humanitarian Innovation fund. She currently coordinates and teaches a Humanitarian Design course at NTNU, with students and lecturers from design, urban development, global health and human geography.

Swords to Ploughshares, Guns to Peace? Admixtures of the FARC's Feapons with Art, Memory, and Disarmament in the Design of Doris Salcedo's Fragmentos

A key question of the international politics of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) – and thereby of peace processes more generally – is what to do with the weapons that former combatants hand over to governmental or international authorities. More precisely, how should these weapons best be disposed of? One intriguing answer is offered by art(ists): weapons can be smolten and cast into monuments. The talk focuses on a particular example of this, *Fragmentos* by acclaimed Colombian artist Doris Salcedo, to think through the question of how the design of monuments from surrendered and destructed weapons figures within post-conflict situations. Conceived as a counter-monument, *Fragmentos* is a space constructed on the grounds of a colonial-era, partly dilapidated house in central Bogotá whose entire floor is lined with tiles made from smolten FARC weapons that were intervened upon by women victims of sexual violence and are now stepped on daily by the exhibit's visitors. The talk places *Fragmentos* in its various Colombian and international, historical and contemporary, political and artistic contexts. Crucially, it points out how surrounding *Fragmentos*, different understandings of the FARC's weapons and of the conflict's violences come to the fore and become contested. These instances of meaning-making cannot be grasped without attention to how the design of the monument admixes the smolten weapons' material, symbolic, and aesthetic properties with three transnational elements – disarmament, memory, and art. Ultimately, the concept-metaphor of the admixture raises the question of how well-controlled these properties' and elements' contribution to a peace process can be.

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Christine Andrä is Assistant Professor in the Department of International Relations and International Organization at the University of Groningen. She holds a PhD in International Politics from Aberystwyth University. Previously, she studied political science, rhetoric, and peace and conflict research. Pursuing interpretive, critical, historical, and arts-based approaches, her research centers on how war, violent conflict, and their aftermaths are understood and known about. Most recently, a collaborative and transdisciplinary research project brought her to Colombia, where she and her colleagues studied the changing subjectivities of former FARC fighters - or peace signatories - in the process of transition.

Humility and Autonomy: Two Lessons from Humanitarian Shelter Design

Inflatable shelters, flat pack homes, and converted shipping containers: these are just three of the many unusual places that humanitarian designers have promoted as solutions to the refugee housing crisis in the past decade. This presentation explores the lessons of such initiatives for humanitarian design, drawing on detailed ethnographic research across Europe and the Middle East between 2016 and 2020. The first example to be explored in this presentation is a small, flat-packed shelter, funded by Ikea and designed in Sweden, which was shipped around the world. The second is the architectural reimagining of enormous abandoned buildings in Berlin, focusing particularly on the hangars of Tempelhof airport and the halls of the International Congress Centre. The third explores a bubble of "inflatable architecture" in Paris, which was meant to communicate openness and beauty as well as the benefits of ephemerality. The lessons of these projects can be summarised in two words: humility and autonomy. Projects like this only worked when they remembered the need to remain humble in their aims and when they took every opportunity to promote the participation and autonomy of the final recipients. The presentation draws out the lessons of these experiences for humanitarian design more broadly, building on findings that will appear in a book published by Stanford University Press later this year.

Tom Scott-Smith (University of Oxford)
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Tom Scott-Smith is Director of the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford and Associate Professor of Forced Migration. He has written two books on humanitarian design: *On an Empty Stomach: Two Hundred Years of Hunger Relief* (published by Cornell University Press), and *Fragments of Home: Refugee Housing and the Politics of Shelter* (forthcoming with Stanford University Press). He general editor of the Berghahn book series in Forced Migration and his series of short documentaries about refugee shelter in Europe, *Shelter Without Shelter*, won the UK Arts and Humanities Research in Film Award in 2020.

The Denied Place: Empowering the Right to Dwell Inside Prisons Through Design Actions

The essay aims to highlight prisons as significant places for humanitarian design and to present some practices conducted in such contexts. Serving as physical apparatuses for control and confinement, prisons establish themselves as autonomous and self-referential environments. They are complex systems shaped by the interplay between penal system, spaces, buildings, and people who live there and interact within them. Here, living together is not a choice but a forced circumstance, making prisons unique instances of inhabited public buildings. Yet, the concept of dwelling, rooted in identification and orientation, is consistently impeded by space which, far from being neutral, is hostile towards the inhabitants. Architects should reclaim their ethical role in discussing detention and its spatial aspects, advocating for actions to improve penitentiary conditions and make them more inhabitable. The essay illustrates how prison spaces exacerbate disparities among communities, showcasing research, educational initiatives, and projects conducted within Italian prisons by the "inside/outside design studio" team at the University of Naples Federico II, led by Professor Santangelo. The objective is to transform prisons from places of inequalities to inclusive ones through the grafting of spaces that integrate the existing structures to give them a new order and meaning. These aim to offer new spatial opportunities for relationships among inmates and between prison inhabitants and the external world, promoting unprecedented activities. The cases presented are outcomes of experimental research through architectural design, informed by questions arising from dialogues with the Penitentiary Administration, inmates, and staff, a collaborative effort spanning a decade and ongoing.

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Francesco Casalbordino, M.Sc. in Architecture in 2018 at the University of Naples with the thesis "Spatial Principles for an Inclusive Prison". In 2022, he earned a Ph.D. in Architecture, final thesis "Images of the Terrestrial. The Project of Worldliness in the Global City". Currently a post-doc researcher at the University of Naples. He is part of the "inside/outside design studio", led by Professor Santangelo, focusing on reimagining prisons as public facilities serving their communities and the city. Theoretical investigations translate into actions on the field, from co-design workshops with inmates to design activities in collaboration with prison administrations.

Meantime Architectures: Shack Innovations and Incremental Designs in Cape Town

Cape Town, a city of unfathomable proportions of poverty, inequality, and dispossession, has an emerging market of shack innovations and humanitarian designs. As defined by practitioners in the city, "shack innovations" can be understood as building experiments and design prototypes for how to improve the material and thermal conditions of shack settlements through small infrastructural improvements in the absence of state assistance. In this contribution, I am most interested in deciphering how humanitarian prototypes, like the shack innovations, become invested with specific capacities, and how they function as participatory and mediatic devices. I focus my discussion on the designs, aesthetics, and materiality, as well as on the expertise and collaboration of humanitarian architects and entrepreneurial designers. My aim is to understand architects' and entrepreneurial designers' expertise and motivations, and how they are marketing their humanitarian projects through architectural representations. Based on ethnographic research for one of my dissertation chapters, I will specifically discuss two so-called shack innovations in more detail by not only describing and contrasting their prototypes and designs, but also by portraying my ethnographic encounters with them and their architects and critics. More broadly, this paper contributes to the growing field and discussion of entrepreneurial humanitarianism or humanitarian architecture. General themes in this contribution are the aesthetization of poverty, the humanitarian desire to scale, and the popular design principle of incremental building solutions.

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Laurin Baumgardt is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Rice University. Laurin's research interests center on architecture and critical infrastructure theory, design and development, and urban activism. For his PhD, he primarily researched and worked with architects, design and planning professionals, non-governmental agencies, and housing activists in Cape Town, South Africa. Before coming to Rice, he studied and taught at the University of Florida, Leipzig University, and Stellenbosch University. Laurin also holds a degree in Philosophy and African Studies which he earned at the Humboldt University in Berlin.

Humanitarian AI Platforms

With the increasing prevalence of large-scale algorithmic systems enhanced by AI, new opportunities as well as risks emerge in the humanitarian sector, while new design strategies emerge. The talk will broadly explore humanitarian platforms of various scales and intents, ranging from decentralized, grassroots initiatives to large-scale algorithmic crisis prediction infrastructures. We will also discuss several critical and speculative design projects aimed at challenging the present and imagining potential futures for volunteering, crisis response, and other humanitarian practices augmented or overlooked by autonomous systems.

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Vytas Jankauskas is an artist and educator. He is the Head of Digital Pool at HEAD-Genève and program lead at La Plateforme in Marseille, where he runs a course on decentralised social networks. Vytas' work has been exhibited internationally including the V&A, CCCB, Medialab Matadero, Chronus Art Center, among others.

Exploring Participatory Humanitarian Design Practices

This interactive serious game (or policy exercise) explores actual and everyday behaviour to inform effective future humanitarian interventions by using the existing relevant body of knowledge and practice. It is based on six designs as developed and used in The Netherlands, Mexico, CAR, Libya, Mali and Niger with policymakers, practitioners, local implementers and trainees/students. The central argument of the game is to engage 'the designed for, as designers' and pave the way for contextualised solutions for a wide array of experienced challenges. Our experience so far demonstrates four dominant design components stand out: human capital, content dynamics, inner world and context dynamics. They matter when managing challenges depend on multi-stakeholder partnerships and the different perspectives of the people involved. In the safe environment of the game, people experience how (power) dynamics evolve. They practice what impact is achieved by changes in their interventions and what this demands of their skills and reflective mindsets. Issues addressed are i.e the transparency of actors regarding their positions, the importance of limited consensus on problems, the tension between institutional and individual logic, and the need for an adaptive action perspective. Exploring the insights and the (collective) behaviour of actors, while considering the importance of location, space and time, show the multiple directions available to further advance humanitarian design. Testing the prototype at the humanitarian design conference allows participants to contribute their experiences and understanding. This way, collective learning informs the future contribution of humanitarian design.

Anne Brinkman & Douwe Buis (Bureauensemble)
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Anne Brinkman (1967) - A practitioner in (international) human development, designing, examining and implementing sustainable practices with, by and for people. Currently implementing an EU- funded programme with CSOs and local and national authorities in Libya. Conducting PhD research on the contribution of different perspectives on the emergence of civic logic in Libya at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Netherlands.

Douwe Buis (1964) - Lives and works by intuition. He senses where the strength or the doubt is, and is able to pin it down - sometimes by close observation, always with the aim to accelerate the dialogue. His questions are powerful, surprising and challenging. He crafts dynamic interactions and strengthens people and group

Humanitarian Gaming

This workshop questions the use of games and simulators to train humanitarian personnel. Compared to other fields, the humanitarian workers are rarely involved into simulation of complex situations. Making decisions in a complex environment is a kind of gameplay provided by management video games. Using this framework, we could offer the experience of multiple perspectives on the same crisis, train to include many parameters in the design of the decision, and hopefully increase the quality of its impact. Also, in many adventure games the player is invited to face sensible psychological issues. Some current European projects are using similar features to train the interview of fragile persons, like victims of domestic abuse. It could also be the starting point to new tools to help personnel to anticipate contact with people in distress.

After an introduction to the topic and the current situation, we would like to share a few examples of existing video games that we identified as potential inspirations. Then we will involve the audience of this workshop into an investigation: what part of the training of humanitarian workers could be covered by features as the ones that we shared. There might be possibilities unforeseen before. We hope that, at the end, we will produce a list of needs to address to academic labs and companies dedicated to the development of training serious games.

Emmanuel Guardiola (TH Köln/ Cologne Game Lab)
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Professor Emmanuel Guardiola is a veteran of the video game industry with over 30 major titles released for publishers and independent studios. Now a member of the Cologne Game Lab at TH-Köln (University of Applied Sciences Cologne), he leads research in the field of game design, focusing on models and processes, and their application to education, health, and humanitarian causes. As an exemplar of his work, the mobile game "Antura & the Letters," recipient of 10 international awards and downloaded 400,000 times, addresses the educational and psychosocial needs of refugee childr

Architecture of Counterrevolution

Samia Henni will introduce and discuss the arguments of her book, *Architecture of Counterrevolution: The French Army in Northern Algeria* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2017, 2022; Paris: Editions B42, 2019). The book examines the roots and effects of French colonial spatial policies and military counterinsurgency operations in Algeria during the Algerian Revolution, or the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962). Henni's study focuses on three interrelated spatial measures: the massive forced resettlement of Algerian populations; the mass-housing programs designed for the Algerian population as part of General Charles de Gaulle's Plan de Constantine; and the fortified administrative new town planned for the protection of the French authorities during the last months of the Algerian Revolution. The aim is to depict the *modus operandi* of these settlements, their roots, developments, scopes, actors, protocols, impacts, and design mechanisms. The book received numerous prestigious awards, including the 2020 Spiro Kostof Book Award by the Society of Architectural Historians, the 2018 Silver Book Award by the Festival International du Livre d'Art et du Film (FILAF), and the 2018 Best Book Award in Theory of Art by the FILAF. The French translation was part of the 2019 Best Architecture Books Selection by L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui and has received extensive media coverage, including Mediapart and Le Monde

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Samia Henni is a historian of the built, destroyed and imagined environments. She is the author of the multi-award-winning *Architecture of Counterrevolution: The French Army in Northern Algeria*, and *Colonial Toxicity: Rehearsing French Radioactive Architecture and Landscape in the Sahara*, and the editor of *Deserts Are Not Empty and War Zones*. She is also the maker of exhibitions, such as *Performing Colonial Toxicity* (2023–04), *Discreet Violence: Architecture and the French War in Algeria* (2017–22), *Archives: Secret-Défense?* (2021), and *Housing Pharmacology* (2020). Currently, she is a Visiting Professor at the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture, ETH Zurich.

Historicizing Technological Alternatives and Counter-Designs

Technological interventions, especially the most visible and well-funded ones, tend to be designed in the global north and “deployed” in the south. However, this conventional picture often excludes important developments. Even in the case of advanced technologies such as digital computing, there are numerous alternative designs from the global south, many of which remain unknown or lesser-known because their stories are undocumented or their records unpreserved. This talk discusses histories of technological alternatives and counter-designs, focusing on two cases. The first case is the design of nonbinary models of computation in postcolonial India. In the aftermath of formal independence from British colonial rule, Indian scientists and engineers embarked on a quest to import or manufacture India’s first digital computers. This quest involved efforts to redesign formal models of computation through the lens of indigenous philosophies. The second case is the design of alternative frameworks of informatics in postrevolutionary Cuba. After the socialist revolution, Cuban information scientists and librarians began to design novel frameworks of informatics that encoded their political ideals. Both cases were state-sponsored projects that hoped to mobilize digital computers for humanitarian ends.

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Rodrigo Ochigame is an anthropologist who writes about computing and artificial intelligence, and an assistant professor at Leiden University. Their research examines unorthodox models of computational rationality, such as nonclassical logics from Brazil, nonbinary Turing machines from India, and frameworks of information science from Cuba. Their teaching specialties include contemporary social and anthropological theory, the history and anthropology of science and technology, and the social dimensions of digital technologies. Ochigame received a BA from the University of California, Berkeley, and a PhD from MIT.

Critical Re-design and Re-enactment as Methods to Interrogate Humanitarian Design

This paper proposes a reflection around methodological approaches in humanitarian design. Grounded in but departing from the notions of critical making and elicitation, it suggests that the practice of re-designing objects and re-enacting their operation can serve as a useful means to interrogate the social and political structures they embody. The thoughtful reverse-engineering of these objects, both in their technical and social dimensions, allows indeed for a way out of the current dichotomy offered by the current landscape of multimodal methods: either the sensory observational positivism of the Harvard Sensory Lab or the aestheticized forensic positivism of Forensic Architecture. Against these two possibilities, critical re-enactment offers a making-based constructivist approach, which highlights both the assumptions and premises of socio-technical systems, while allowing for the unexpected and unplanned to manifest itself to the analysis. The paper will draw examples from current work on computer-vision based socio-technical systems and the affinities they have with humanitarian design practices.

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Dr. Francesco Ragazzi is associate professor in International Relations at Leiden University (Netherlands) and associated scholar at the Centre d’Etude sur les Conflits, Liberté et Sécurité (France). He is also co-director of ReCNTR (Leiden University’s Center on Multimodal and Audiovisual methods). His research interests include counter-radicalisation, counter-terrorism and digital surveillance. His current research project Security Vision explores the security uses of computer vision in areas such as biometric surveillance, social media content moderation and border control.

Deep Play? Notes on the Future of Human and Non-Human Vulnerabilities

Expert organisations are arguably undergoing a paradigm shift in the move from reactive to anticipatory approaches in crisis response and the handling of catastrophic risks. As such, the field of emergency response is increasingly turning towards future-oriented approaches in disaster and risk preparedness initiatives. Despite similar trends in the preemptive visualisation of catastrophe across groups of 'emergency experts', there are differences in who is considered vulnerable, how vulnerabilities are defined and supposedly, the ways in which such vulnerabilities are addressed. Indeed, emergency experts in scientific and gamified modelling activities quantitatively assess, qualitatively explore and argumentatively rationalise human and non-human vulnerabilities resulting from crisis and catastrophe. This chapter examines such weighting of vulnerabilities in enacted designs of serious games and moral dilemmas, and the contested nature of human and non-human vulnerabilities by asking: how are vulnerabilities construed among 'emergency experts'? What are the implications of such different construals for the handling of human and non-human vulnerability as well? Based on digital and on-site ethnographic research with effective altruists, humanitarian practitioners and serious game designers, I draw on four months of participant observation in Kenya, Switzerland and Berlin, including semi-structured interviews, online and print literature on 'modelling catastrophe' to formulate tentative responses to these questions.

Julis Charlotte Koch (Geneva Graduate Institute)

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Julis Koch is a PhD candidate at the Geneva Graduate Institute. Her current research project raises questions about the practices and epistemologies of innovation in emergency preparedness. Apart from a previous stint in the technology start-up sector, she also made academic pit stops at SOAS in London, UK and University College Utrecht, the Netherlands.

Resilient Futures: Transformative Humanitarian Design for Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

The Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh exposes the inadequacies of conventional humanitarian strategies, which often overlook intricate socio-political dynamics, power differentials, and the agency of affected communities. This paper explores how a paradigm shift in humanitarian practice can better address the needs and challenges faced by Rohingya refugees by examining the convergence of resilience-building initiatives, humanitarian design, and transformative methodologies. Drawing from diverse perspectives in humanitarian and refugee studies, the research investigates transformative approaches to humanitarian design that empower Rohingya communities. Through qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, case studies, and on-the-ground observations conducted in Cox's Bazar refugee camps in 2023, the study delves into the root causes of the crisis and critiques the prevailing power dynamics that shape conventional humanitarian interventions. The findings underscore the pivotal role of community-led initiatives in enabling Rohingya participation in designing interventions aligned with their cultural values and socio-political context. Furthermore, the study evaluates the impact of innovative technologies, including digital mapping tools and community-based early warning systems, on bolstering the resilience of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. These findings advocate for innovative and transformative interventions to bolster resilience among displaced Rohingya communities, challenging the notion of humanitarian neutrality and proposing a rights-based framework that centers on the agency and dignity of the Rohingya people. By harnessing these advancements, the research aims to enhance community preparedness, facilitate access to essential resources, and foster communication and coordination within refugee settlements, thereby advancing sustainable, inclusive, and effective interventions to enhance the well-being and resilience of Rohingya communities amidst adversity.

Ala Uddin (University of Chittagong, Bangladesh)

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I am a professor of anthropology at the University of Chittagong, Bangladesh. I extensively researched the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts. My primary research focused on the survival strategies of these indigenous peoples whose land was being encroached upon by outsiders (i.e., Bengali settlers). My research interests span Rohingya refugee crisis, social gerontology, religious pluralism, urban poor, health and culture, migration and diaspora, overseas migration of female workers, and forest management. I co-authored a Bengali book titled, Theoretical Anthropology, and authored several articles published in national and international peer-reviewed journals such as Ethnopolitics, Journal of Refugee Studies, Development in Practice, Social Anthropology, Asian Ethnicity. Currently, I am conducting research on Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh as part of a joint JSPS-UGC research project (2020-2024).

Climate Change and Humanitarian Aid

Climate change and sustainable development agendas have had little influence in the field of international humanitarian aid. Most recently however, the humanitarian aid industry has begun to realise the importance of the impacts of and on climate change with humanitarian efforts seeking to understand how they can implement climate-resilient interventions that promote sustainable development and planetary health. The field of humanitarian aid and climate change operate largely in silos with separate organisations, funding streams, practitioners and academics. There are approximately 570,000 field personnel – not including those employed directly by donors or at Headquarter level in the humanitarian sector and as of April 2023 there were 404.3 million people across 83 countries in need of humanitarian aid. Relief efforts have a negative impact on the climate and the delivery of ongoing humanitarian aid is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. There is an urgent need to remove the silos and adapt humanitarian interventions to ensure they are climate informed thus, minimising their impact on climate change and reducing the risks of climate change on humanitarian interventions. The authors draw on their lived experiences of humanitarian crises and humanitarian interventions from Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America to demonstrate the challenges and ongoing negative impacts humanitarian aid delivery is having on the environment and climate. Further, we examine the efforts of climate proofing humanitarian interventions, exploring some of the methods tested and presenting the urgency for much greater action in this field.

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Jo Rose is a Senior Lecturer in Humanitarian Affairs and Programme Leader of the MSc International Humanitarian Affairs (MIHA) at the University of York. Jo has worked intensively in complex political emergencies including Afghanistan, Colombia, Liberia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Sudan. Jo collaborates with disaster and conflict-affected communities and local partners to understand the needs and priorities of the local communities. Jo is experienced in using indigenous research methodologies, methods and modes of communication. She also collaborates with communities as equal partners to co-create solutions. Her work is founded upon developing culturally and contextually appropriate responses to disasters and crises.

Participatory Design with Children and Youth in Lebanon

CatalyticAction has been working in Lebanon since 2015, adopting a participatory approach to design and build safe spaces for children, youth, and their communities. We work with communities to produce dignified built environments where everyone can take part in the creation of equitable, inclusive, and sustainable communities. Through community engagement we build local human capacity that ensures our work has a lasting positive impact. CatalyticAction's work has responded to the multiple crises that Lebanon has faced in the past years: the Syrian conflict and the consequent influx of refugees, the deteriorating economic crisis, COVID-19, and the Beirut port explosion in 2020.

We have partnered on several projects with humanitarian organisations including UNICEF, UN-Habitat, UNDP, and Save the Children. Within these partnerships we have offered an alternative model to approach built interventions, where local community's participation is essential to achieve long-term impact and sustainability. This participatory approach also offers a different view on design, where architects become 'translators' of people's visions, aspirations, and needs. This challenges the notion of the architect who provides solutions, which in a humanitarian context is particularly problematic. Instead, the design process is an empowering one, where people (including children and youth) take an active role in shaping built interventions. Furthermore, such interventions, and particularly those addressing children's needs, play a strategic role in alleviating social tensions as they represent a common interest among diverse communities.

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Riccardo Conti is the co-founder and Executive Director at CatalyticAction. He is an architect and urban designer with over 10 years of experience in participatory design within humanitarian contexts. He has led numerous placemaking initiatives, successfully overseeing the design and construction of over 50 co-designed built interventions implemented in different contexts. Before founding CatalyticAction, he has worked as architect and project manager for projects in Jordan, Kenya, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Riccardo holds an MSc from University College London in Building and Urban Design in Development, and a B.A. in Architecture from Politecnico di Milano.

Ethnofuturism, Design and Technodiversity: Towards Open Practice(s)

Critical futures studies has been a provocative field of inquiry across the globe. In particular, actors who have been excluded from participating in the co-creation of their own horizons are actively pursuing new approaches with a view to the South. Environmental and ethnocentric futures challenge the Cartesian separation of culture and nature. This is why a question about the humanitarian movement now has a momentum, a vital impetus. How might humanitarian praxis be reconfigured through the lens of mutual aid? Peoples around the world have maintained their biocultural heritage on the basis of the biological and cultural diversity of their territories. These regimes of knowledge and practice are linked to fresh design frameworks beyond 'design thinking'. Thus, design and autonomy must strengthen local and global capacities for collaboration, preparedness and resilience. We need to embrace diversity, the alternatives to hegemonic notions of design and technology. Design for technodiversity is still a space to be occupied by academia, international organisations, social movements and governments. The latter is an ongoing movement nourished by amateur designers and practitioners in rural and urban areas, with limited connections to international or even national research centres. It is time to generate open practices that relate multiple epistemologies, territorialities and temporalities to the right to research for plural futures.

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Consultant and researcher of the Research Group on Technologies and Innovation for Community Development of the National University of Colombia. He has dedicated his professional life to reflect and act around the relationship between technology and society, with some experiences in Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Uganda, and Nepal. He develops collaborative Research-Creation processes with rural communities in the Caribbean and Pacific coast of Colombia. In addition to the academic and working world, he spends his time climbing and hiking in the Colombian páramos.

Utopian Demand in Humanitarian Communication Design? Ecological Observations from the 2022 Venice Art Biennale

Humanitarian communication, defined as public practices of collective emotion—or vocabularies of suffering, compassion, and action—are part of NGO-fundraising campaigns and international court proceedings, but they are also part of the humanitarianization of everyday life. Instead of relying on the production of fear, humanitarianization rests on pity. But when, where and how could a different politics be possible? Could another structuring logic be possible, perhaps solidarity or comradeship? While humanitarian communication has arguably always been a utopian field, the imaginaries on which transnational 'helping' are designed are already understood and critiqued by decolonial scholars in theory, and they are remedied in practice through countless 'codes of conduct' for individuals and organizations. Despite popular calls for 'decolonization,' the business case for 'white saviorism' has never been stronger. Would then a possible design for humanitarian communication embody a decolonized version of transnational helping? Based on the feminist theorist Kathi Weeks's framework for 'utopian demands' as an action-object based on the desires of existing subjects, the paper asks, what utopian demands might we dream for humanitarian communication's future? My research on the commodification of humanitarianism provides the springboard to explore humanitarian communications design and what might constitute utopian demand. The data come from participant ethnography in the cosmopolitan space for visual arts from 3 trips (scoping, focusing, deepening) at the 2022 Venice Biennale. Additionally, I have attended every Biennale except for one since 1997, and have spent more than five years living in Africa conducting ethnographic research on humanitarian and development.

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Lisa Ann Richey @BrandAid_World is Professor of Globalization in the Department of Management, Society and Communication at the Copenhagen Business School in Denmark. She completed a PhD in Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Post-Doc in Anthropological Demography at Harvard University. Her current research projects are Commodifying Compassion: Implications of Turning People and Humanitarian Causes into Marketable Things (2016-2023) and Everyday Humanitarianism in Tanzania (2019-2025). She is the author or editor of seven books including Celebrity Humanitarianism and North-South Relations: Politics, Place and Power (2016) and Batman Saves the Congo: Business, Disruption and the Politics of Development with Alexandra Budabin (2021). She works in the areas of international aid and humanitarian politics, the aid business and commodification of causes, and new transnational actors and alliances in the global South. Lisa was the founding Vice-President of the Global South Caucus of the International Studies Association (ISA). www.lisaannrichey.com

Regimes of Goodness or Good for Business? Pragmatic Lessons from Nordic Humanitarian Design Projects in East Africa

The 1970s was a decade of development. As the newly independent African states were looking to rebuild their state infrastructures, they reached out to new partners seemingly untainted by the colonial past. Countries like Sweden, Denmark and Norway led this effort internationally, administering nearly 1% of their GDP in “focus countries”—Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia—through bilateral aid agreements. This aid often materialised in humanitarian design projects focused on education, healthcare or housing—a profile which contributed to creating the idea of the North based on “common goodwill.” For the Nordics, this was an opportunity to solidify their soft power in the region and, following the tradition of the protestant missionaries, do “good” by transferring ideas, knowledge and money. Beyond social aspirations, humanitarian projects meant good business: Nordic commercial actors created a parallel infrastructure in the region at the service of humanitarian design projects. Norwegian architects, Danish interior designers and Swedish engineers opened prosperous design offices in Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and Lusaka, and global consultancies like Sweco, Norconsult, and White found themselves in the sweet spot between international donor organisations and national state actors. Through specific case studies of Nordic humanitarian design projects in East Africa, the project proposes to trace the invisible commercial infrastructures created in parallel to the humanitarian design ventures. Drawing from original archival sources, the paper dissects the power dynamics between those who designed and those who were designed for. In doing so, it argues that pragmatic lessons from Nordic humanitarian design projects offer a particularly fruitful entry point to address the imposed contemporary imbalances between the Global South and the Global North.

Maryia Rusak (ETH Zürich)
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Maryia Rusak is an ETH Postdoctoral Fellow (2022-24) at the Chair of the History and Theory of Urban Design. Her current postdoctoral project investigates the Nordic architecture of foreign aid in postcolonial Africa, focusing on the pragmatic economic rationale behind architectural production. Rusak holds a PhD from the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (2022), an M.Arch from KTH, Sweden and a BA from Princeton University, USA. In her research, Maryia is particularly interested in histories of everyday objects, webs of bureaucratic institutions, obscure intricacies of architectural production and, in general, how things are made.

Fashion Design as Humanitarian Design: Elizabeth Bayley Willis and the United Nations' Cold War Textile Diplomacy in India

This paper explores the cultural work of Elizabeth Bayley Willis, an American scholar, museum curator, and designer recruited by the United Nations Technical Assistance Program in 1952 to aid the Indian government in reforming the country's textile and clothing industry. It critically investigates the ‘design bridging’ strategy she employed to forge connections between Hindi-speaking, rural, and impoverished textile artisans and English-speaking, urban, affluent figures of the fashion industry in the US and Europe, including renowned design houses like Bloomingdales, Neiman Marcus, and Hermès. By asking the question “What kind of shared material, aesthetic, and technological constellations of value were produced through the co-design of a Hermès scarf in 1950s Varanasi?” I analyze participants’ humanitarian efforts to transfer, receive, and commensurate forms of elite-marked capital and habitus. This paper sheds light on a less visible genealogy of humanitarian design, but one that has been profoundly impactful around the world. Willis’ work went on to inform a broad program of UN international arts policy promoted to restructure the economies and media worlds of Globally Southern countries, like Vietnam and Morocco. The paper provides important background context for historicizing and assessing the trajectory and in some cases failures of pre-neoliberal era arts-based humanitarian policy.

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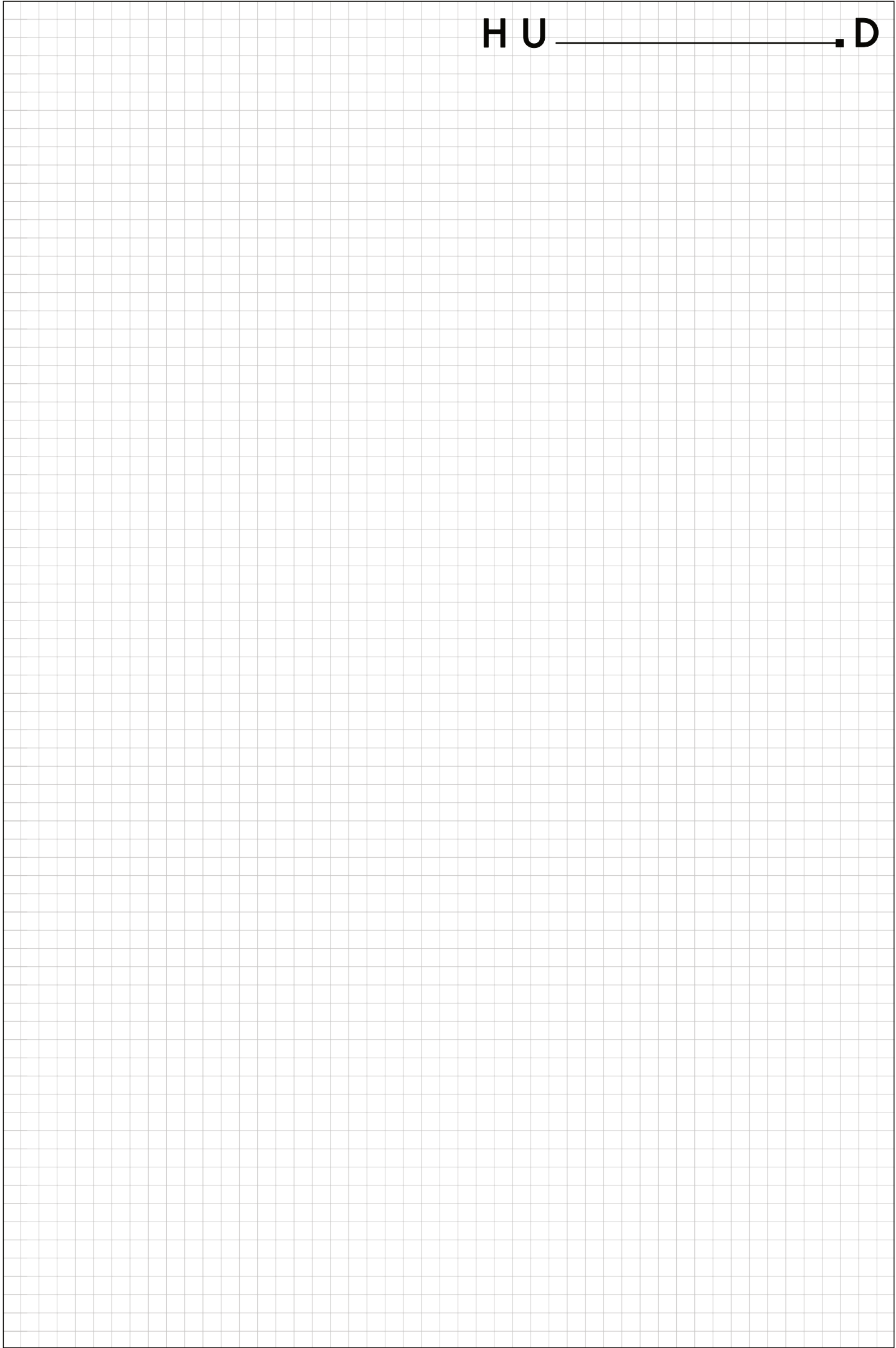
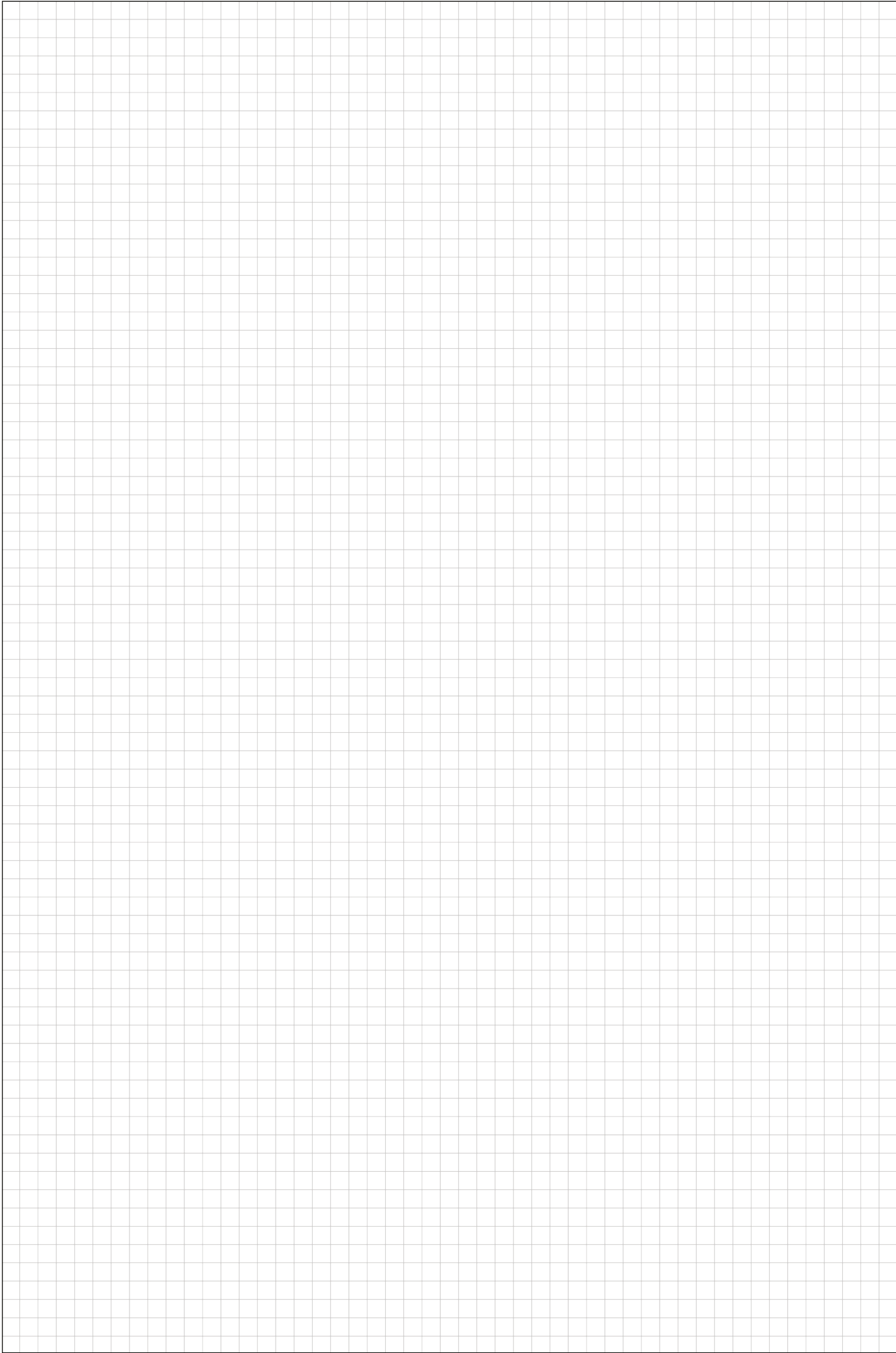
Matthew Raj Webb (he/him) is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Anthropology at New York University, where he also graduated from the Program in Culture & Media. His dissertation addresses the transnational production and nationalist transformation of design education in India in the context of debates about intercultural expertise, professional culture, state authoritarianism, and historical memory.

From Humanitarian Design to Technopolitical Imagination

Humanitarian action inspires both public accolades and academic critique, sometimes in equal measures. When filtered through design, the humanitarian impulse has generated an array of ingenious micro-scale devices like water filters, low-cost incubators, and alternative toilets. Such objects may meet the urgent needs of some recipients, but rarely offer much prospect of an expansive future or address the political and economic forces that frame most human suffering. Nonetheless, they serve as a mirror for ethical imagination about innovation, along with claims and counterclaims over its potential significance. In this talk, I approach the topic from the perspective of “technopolitics”, a conceptual frame that scholars in science and technology studies have deployed to analyze the constitution of material projects through relations of power (e.g. Hecht 1995; Mitchell 2002; Von Schnitzler 2016). Here I broaden the scope and shift the accent of the term, underscoring the technical implications of political projects, along with the larger web of dreams and expectations now woven between norms of life and material infrastructures. The goal is to suggest that political aspirations – including those that seek to promote structural change – demand material reconfigurations: just as artifacts have politics, politics have artifacts. When debating terms of potential futures, then, it helps to foster an explicitly technopolitical imagination. Through their very presentism and limits, even the modest implements of slightly better survival might invite that.

Peter Redfield (University of Southern California)
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Peter Redfield is Professor of Anthropology and Erburu Chair in Ethics, Globalization and Development at the University of Southern California. Trained as a cultural anthropologist sympathetic to history, he concentrates on circulations of science, technology and medicine in colonial and postcolonial contexts. He has held fellowships at the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe and the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, in addition to serving as President of the Society for Cultural Anthropology. His publications include *Life in Crisis: The Ethical Journey of Doctors Without Borders* and a co-edited issue of *Limn* on humanitarian goods and development devices.



WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN DESIGN ?

H U ————— D

THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN DESIGN (HUD) IS A RESEARCH PLATFORM EXPLORING CRITICAL YET PRAGMATIC MATERIAL, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS GLOBAL AND LOCAL HUMANITARIAN SPACES.

Monday – 13th May

Tuesday – 14th May

08:30 – 09:00 Welcome - H4.01

09:00 – 10:00 Introduction - H4.01

10:00 – 10:15 Break

10:15 – 11:45 Practices & Collaborations - H4.01

- Hartmut Behr (Newcastle): Bridging Conceptual Thinking with Political Practice Under Conditions of Uncertainty
- Brita Fladvad (NTNU): Humanitarian Design and "The Real Problem" in Times of Poly and Permacrises
- Christine Andrä (Groningen): Swords to Ploughshares, Guns to Peace? Admixtures of the FARC's Weapons with Art, Memory, and Disarmament in the Design of Doris Salcedo's Fragmentos

11:45 – 12:00 Break

12:00 – 13:00 Public Keynote - Design Room

Tom Scott-Smith (Oxford): Humility and Autonomy: Two Lessons from Humanitarian Shelter Design

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 Places & Spaces - H4.01

- Francesco Casalbordino (Naples): The Denied Place: Empowering the Right to Dwell Inside Prisons Through Design Actions.
- Laurin Baumgardt (Rice University): Meantime Architectures: Shack Innovations and Incremental Designs in Cape Town
- Vytautas Jankauskas (HEAD): Humanitarian AI Platforms

15:30 – 15:45 Break

15:45 – 17:15 Gaming & Participatory Practices - H4.01

- Anne Brinkman; Douwe Buis (Bureauensemble): Exploring Participatory Humanitarian Design Practices
- Emmanuel Guardiola (Cologne Game Lab): Humanitarian Gaming

18:00 – 19:00 Public Keynote - Design Room

Samia Henni (ETH Zürich): Architecture of Counterrevolution

08:30 – 09:00 Welcome - H4.01

09:00 – 10:00 Technology & Counter-Designs - H4.01

- Rodrigo Ochigame (Leiden): Historicizing Technological Alternatives and Counter-Designs
- Francesco Ragazzi (Leiden): Critical Re-design and Re-Enactment as Methods to Interrogate Humanitarian Design
- Julis Charlotte Koch (Geneva Graduate Institute): Deep Play? Notes on the Future of Human and Non-Human Vulnerability

10:00 – 10:15 Break

10:15 – 11:45 Futures and Transformations - H4.01

- Ala Uddin (Chittagong University): Resilient Futures: Transformative Humanitarian Design for Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh
- Jo Rose (York University): Climate Change and Humanitarian Aid
- Riccardo Conti (Catalytic Action): Participatory Design with Children and Youth in Lebanon

11:45 – 12:00 Break

12:00 – 13:00 Public Keynote - H4.01

Juan David Reina-Rozo (Universidad Nacional de Colombia): Ethnofuturism, Design and Technodiversity: Towards Open Practice(s)

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 Aesthetics - H4.01

- Matthew Raj Webb (New York University): Fashion Design as Humanitarian Design: Elizabeth Bayley Willis and the United Nations' Cold War Textile Diplomacy in India
- Lisa Ann Richey (Copenhagen Business School): Utopian Demand in Humanitarian Communication Design? Ecological Observations from the 2022 Venice Art Biennale
- Maryia Rusak (ETH Zürich): Regimes of Goodness or Good for Business? Pragmatic Lessons from Nordic Humanitarian Design Projects in East Africa

15:45 – 16:45 Public Keynote - H4.01

Peter Redfield(University of Southern California): From Humanitarian Design to Technopolitical Imagination

HEAD – Genève
H4.01 - Design Room
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