



HOSTED BY THE NORWEGIAN
CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN
STUDIES

Online seminar & discussion

Dimensions of Power in Humanitarian Contexts

Tuesday 8 June 2021

14:30-16:30 CEST (Oslo time)

SEMINAR PROGRAM

14:30 - INTRODUCTION: Antonio De Lauri, NCHS Director

14:35 - SESSION 1: Guest presentation



**MICHAEL
BARNETT**

University Professor of International Affairs & Political Science
George Washington University

**'A Humanitarian Club: Power in the Humanitarian
Architecture'**

15:00 - DISCUSSION: Question & answer

15:25 - BREAK (5 minutes)

15:30 - SESSION 2: Panel presentations



SOFIE HENRIKSEN

DIIS & Copenhagen
Business School

'Hacking the Refugee
Crisis: Examining
Corporate Tech Narratives
in Humanitarianism'



EMMANUEL VIGA

Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

'Moral and Social Dimensions
of Accountability in Civic
Humanitarianism: Relational
Aid among South Sudanese
Refugees in Uganda'



HANNA MATT

University of
Manchester

'The Russian Red Cross
during the Russo-
Japanese War
(1904-1905)'



**ISABELLE
SCHLÄPFER**

University of Bern

'Humanitarian Technologies as
Sociotechnical Imaginaries:
How Multi-national Companies
Impact the Idea of Principled
Aid through Technologies'

16:10 - DISCUSSION: Question & answer



Dimensions of Power in Humanitarian Contexts

SEMINAR ABSTRACTS

SESSION 1: GUEST PRESENTATION



MICHAEL BARNETT

University Professor of International
Affairs & Political Science
George Washington University

'A Humanitarian Club: Power in the Humanitarian Architecture'

It has been five years since the humanitarian community gathered in Istanbul for the first (and only) World Humanitarian Summit and pledged to 'localize' humanitarianism - to shift power, resources, and authority from international to local actors. But there has been very little movement. Given the past failures to share power, this is not a surprise. But why has it been so hard for a humanitarian governance that pledges solidarity and equality to practice what it preaches?

SESSION 2: PANEL PRESENTATIONS



SOFIE HENRIKSEN

PhD Fellow
**Danish Institute for
International Studies &
Copenhagen Business School**

'Hacking the Refugee Crisis: Examining Corporate Tech Narratives in Humanitarianism'

To "hack" a problem has become a mainstream phrase for creatively solving an issue via digital technology and computer programming. This phrase connects to broader narratives and imaginaries on the role technology and tech corporations can and should play in solving local and global crises. From local "refugee hackathons" to global partnerships between humanitarian organizations and tech corporations, these corporate tech narratives are also increasingly part of humanitarian practices and discourses. But what do these narratives do and how can we understand them within contemporary humanitarian power dynamics?



EMMANUEL VIGA

PhD Researcher
**Norwegian University of
Science and Technology**

'Moral and Social Dimensions of Accountability in Civic Humanitarianism: Relational Aid among South Sudanese Refugees in Uganda'

The Grand Bargain represents an attempt to close the humanitarian financing gap and increase downward accountability by “getting more means into the hands of people in need”. However, donors have been reluctant to directly finance local actors/civic humanitarians for lack of monitoring and financial tracking frameworks, let alone their embeddedness in socio-cultural relationships. With reference to South-Sudanese refugees in Uganda, I explore civic humanitarians, the type of aid they provide, and how accountability is understood and practiced in more relational forms of aid.



HANNA MATT

PhD Researcher
University of Manchester

'The Russian Red Cross during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)'

The domestic activities of different branches of the Russian Red Cross highlight the important contributions of a variety of different actors at the national and local levels to relief during the Russo-Japanese War. I seek to understand the place of the Russian Red Cross in the wider architecture of charity in late Imperial Russia and highlight the importance of local networks and initiatives across the Empire, which contributed significantly to the work of its national aid organization during this conflict.



ISABELLE SCHLÖPFER

Postdoctoral Researcher
University of Bern

'Humanitarian Technologies as Sociotechnical Imaginaries: How Multi-national Companies Impact the Idea of Principled Aid through Technologies'

I examine the role of corporate companies in the making of what humanitarian aid stands for through technologies designed to improve aid delivery, and how this affects traditional conceptions of principled aid. Utilizing the theory of sociotechnical imaginaries and two cases of corporate technologies, namely, IKEA's 'Better Shelter' and MasterCard's prepaid cards, I investigate how corporate visions establish as dominant interpretations of aid. I discuss how both corporations establish their visions through a powerful narrative of freedom and empowerment that promotes an idea of dignity for aid recipients rooted in the logic of consumption. This can lead to new operational priorities and moral guidelines for the development of humanitarian technologies following the idea of technologies as commodities, conflicting with traditional conceptions of principled aid and raising questions about accountability.