

The Humanitarian Architect: Notes on Ethical Engagements

The notion of architectural agency has regained currency in the last decade, establishing its foundation from earlier movements of the 1960's and making an increasing appearance in a myriad of lectures, publications and exhibitions aimed at pushing this earlier work into present-day relevancy.¹ In our current world of environmental volatility, fluctuating economic crises and political unrest, agency's re-found popularity in the design field can largely be attributed to our reactions to and involvement in highly popularized debates around climate change, political protest and socio-economic inequality. As such, the 'architect-as-agent' paradigm is part of an ongoing attempt to assess the ability of spatial practitioners across the world to augment their social, political and economic structures in line with the demands of a more challenging future.

SUZANNE HARRIS-BRANDTS
University of Waterloo

The literature on architecturally-tied humanitarian intervention has been well-developed in terms of documenting projects of community participation and cost-effective vernacular construction.² Yet this paradigm is seldom discussed within the broader context of foreign intervention (Chatterjee, Scheid), global States of Exception (Agamben), and humanitarian aid (Holzgreffe, J.L., & Robert O. Keohane), which may be one of the reasons why its relative successfulness remains somewhat unclear.³ The primary objective of this paper, therefore, is to investigate the social, political, and legal forces that complicate humanitarian architecture, while also scrutinizing its broader implications for ethical architectural citizenship. In line with these complications, particular interest is paid to highlighting the capacity for architectural agency to inadvertently become detrimental to the populations it seeks to serve, as well as the precarious capacity for it to slip into more militant territory, in order to accomplish its principal objectives. Thus, one of the paper's key arguments is that humanitarian architects need to reconsider the overarching impact and complications associated with their foreign presence.

To elucidate such complexities, first, I will briefly cover the renewed calls for architectural agency and our varied professional responses to them, focusing primarily on humanitarian interventions in foreign territory. Secondly, I outline why a reconsideration of our ethical positioning within such humanitarian practices is necessary by drawing on the work of a number of scholars- both within and

outside of the field of architecture. I will argue that foreign intervention is frequently more complicated than perceived by designers and that its underlying legal and political implications are beyond what many in the architectural profession are versed in handling. Finally, I will discuss some prospective means of transforming our future methods in humanitarian architecture- both within academia and the practicing profession.

Given that the majority of humanitarian aid work has involved extensive medical relief campaigns and that the foundations of anthropological study rest in foreign fieldwork, these disciplines are called upon as useful precedents for understanding our own professional ethical stances. It is hoped that this cross-disciplinary analysis can contribute to the establishment of a more ethically-based model of architectural citizenship, with regards to foreign aid intervention.

RE-ESTABLISHED ARCHITECTURAL AGENCY

Speaking at the 2013 AIA Convention, *Architecture for Humanity* founder Cameron Sinclair called architects to action;

“Less than three percent of the world uses the services of architects, yet seventy-one percent of the world are in dire need of decent design, of good, well-thought, meaningful buildings. Guess who can do it? All of you! There shouldn’t be an architect in the United States out of work if we can tap the seventy-one percent of people in the world who are looking for dignified shelter and strong communities.”⁴

As exemplified in Sinclair’s quote, the wake of recent economic and natural disasters – from the 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami, to Hurricane Katrina, the Eurozone Crisis, and the 2010 Haiti Earthquake- brought the idea of architectural activism back to the professional foreground.⁵ Within architecture at large, the quest to articulate new forms of social engagement manifested itself in various ways. Proponents sought to tap into previously overlooked everyday approaches to self-empowerment through spatial performance and building which could move the architectural consciousness away from concerns of formalism and the commoditized architectural object and toward the work of grassroots organizations and alternative means of collective engagement.⁶

Others took on an observational roll, chronicling from the sidelines global examples of ‘alternative spatial practice’ in an effort to better understand the various ways in which our profession (frequently at the hands of non-architects) was shifting.⁷ In conjunction with this effort, the accolades bestowed upon the world’s solo architects as hero-authors were increasingly thrown into question. Projects orchestrated and constructed by collectives of non-architects began to appear everywhere and were lauded for their inclusive participatory approach.⁸

Yet, a number of complications surrounding this renewed agency soon came to the fore and debate began to emerge, particularly around questions of the architect’s expanding scope and continued relevance.⁹ Scepticism also surrounded the actual efficacy of much-lauded user participation models.¹⁰ Outlining some of the specific concerns associated with the surge in participatory rhetoric, German architect Markus Miessen cautioned against the production of what he dubbed “*Harmonistan*”: a pseudo participatory superficial democracy in which power is perpetually deflected and the term ‘participation’ is used as a tool for political legitimization and a means of withdrawing from responsibility.¹¹

Most pertinent to this paper, concerns surrounding the ethics of various approaches to architectural humanitarian interventions also began to surface,

including sensitivity toward the effective representation of a foreign 'other' and uncertainty over the architect's legal positioning in foreign territories with regards to both local and international law.¹² This last series of somewhat overlooked concerns surrounding ethics will herein be discussed at length.

SPEAKING FOR OTHERS

As architects, designers, and any other order of spatial practitioners, we work hard to quantify the needs of others, producing work which intrinsically encompasses our own imposed notions of transformation, utopianism and overall theories of responsiveness. Yet, given that many of the current opportunities for architectural humanitarianism remain vastly geographically selective- focusing on third world countries, the global south or poor North American inner cities- there's a high likelihood for misunderstanding and misrepresentation. In many instances, the architect ends up speaking as advocate or messenger for a group presumed to be unable to speak for themselves. The large shift toward popularized models of user participation by-and-large strove to eliminate this challenge. But to what degree is the role of the architect intrinsically tied to this problem of representing another? Can it ever be obviated? Must not our work always involve a component of projective self-authorship in some capacity?

Surprisingly, given the intrinsic role of projective design in architecture, discussions around the challenges associated with speaking for others have been disappointingly slow to enter the architectural sphere. In traditional client-architect relationships it is presumed that those who pay for our services are getting a product that represents their desires. This, of course, is progressively thrown into question when the 'client' is a broader organization representing vulnerable others or a large corporation; more broadly, when the building inhabitants differ from the building owners. When the architect operates indirectly through the framework of a humanitarian entity (such as the UN, NGOs, charities, or foundations) questions of law, citizenship and human rights make ethical positioning even more blurry.

In her famous 1988 article entitled "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" philosopher, post-colonial theorist and Columbia University Professor Gayatri Spivak challenged the notion that we can ever appropriately represent another.¹⁴ In describing what she terms 'the subaltern', Spivak draws attention to the question of representation and marginalization of the Third World and lower classes by dissecting the ethics involved in the West's 'othering' processes. She argues that our discursive formations are intimately tied to our positioning- be it cultural, socio-economic or geographic (to name but a few) - and as such, our work cannot easily be decoupled from these preformed positions, even when there is a conscious desire to do so.

Accordingly, the implication for architectural education is that foreign design-build studios may by and large be inappropriate in many instances and that at the least, if continued, such studios should strongly consider the introduction of rigorous accompanying courses in field methodology, more akin to those found in the social sciences. It may also be prudent for educators to weigh the value of such brief foreign design-build studios against that of analyzing existing foreign imposed architectural projects (such as the work of Le Corbusier, Prouvé, CIAM, Team 10, ATBAT-Afrique, and Gamma Group, to name a few). Explored within post-colonial discourse, analyzing such projects could help to offer insight into possible areas of neocolonialism within the social ambitions of present-day humanitarian architecture.

Reflecting upon Spivak's work, Professor of Critical Development Studies at York University, Ilan Kappor asks;

"What are the ethico-political implications of our representations for the Third World, and especially, for the subaltern groups that preoccupy a good part of our work? To what extent do our depictions and actions marginalize or silence these groups and mask our own complicities?"¹⁵

Questions which should resonate with those engaging in foreign design work, as well.

Raising similar concerns, philosopher Linda Alcoff's article "*The Problem of Speaking for Others*" echoes Spivak's commentary by highlighting the complexities of foreign field work, specifically with respect to higher academia.¹⁶ Alcoff notes that;

"the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less-privileged persons has actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for."¹⁷

She later cautions;

"If one's immediate impulse is to teach rather than listen to a less-privileged speaker, one should resist that impulse long enough to interrogate it carefully."¹⁸

As a historical architectural example, we need only look to Hassan Fathy's 1950s *New Gournia Village* – a project which was much-lauded for its design technique and clarity, but which ultimately could not escape labels of failure since the very inhabitants it sought to serve deplored their forced relocation.¹⁹ To such inhabitants, Fathy had been the representative of desires they had not actually ever expressed.

In light of the complicated nature of speaking on behalf of others, it becomes easy to see how the fervor of designer intervention has struggled with not only being ineffectual at times, but sadly, even detrimental. Add to this the difficulties of unfamiliarity with foreign languages, customs and cultures, as well as working in regions of warfare, gang violence and volatile state political structures, and the challenges surrounding humanitarian intervention multiply exponentially.

THE ARCHITECT-MILITANT DILEMMA

As humanitarian actions increasingly blur with (and indeed, are frequently borne from) militarized conflict, it is inevitable that work surrounding such manifestations would also risk doing the same. In light of this potential, the capacity for intervention to quickly switch over into more aggressive territory and violent forms of militancy remains alarmingly under-scrutinized in our understandings of humanitarian architecture. With specific regards to warfare, attention in urban studies has been given to the concepts of 'urbicide' (Coward, Gregory), 'conflict urbanism' (Graham, Misselwitz) and the utilization of architecture by state militaries (Weizman, Sorkin).²⁰ But little coverage has explored the potential for an emerging paradigm of the architect-militant.²¹ Given the contemporary surge in research surrounding agency and social activism in architecture, this discussion is overdue.

What are our professional obligations as our humanitarian actions blur into more aggressive territory? Does the architect's moral responsibility rest with their duty to society or to the law? What happens when the two are at odds with one another- or in situations where multiple conflicting definitions of 'law' and

'society' exist? ²² Can it be considered moral for an architect to break the law in places where the greater intentions of a state's legislation toward its civilians are uncertain – or in instances where local laws stand at odds with the conventions of international law? Is it, therefore, ever professionally ethical for an architect to become more militant?

Answering 'yes' to this question, *The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions* (ICAHD) is a human rights and peace organization resisting Israel's policy of demolishing Palestinian homes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and within Israel. Part of this resistance involves helping those whose houses have been demolished to rebuild over and over again, in direct opposition to the military orders of the occupying Israeli army. ²³ ICAD's recent alignment with the UN via their *Economic and Social Council Special Consultative Status* signals the organization's explicit bypassing of local military law for that of International law. Accordingly, the organization has been both highly lauded (for upholding International law) and harshly criticized (for disregarding Israeli authority), depending upon the critic.

Calling attention to such often overlooked complexities of humanitarian intervention, architect Eyal Weizman has been one of the most notable in our field to cross disciplinary boundaries and highlight the ethical complications of foreign work in contested areas. Drawing on the theories of Hannah Arendt, Weizman's 2012 book *"The Least of All Possible Evils"* introduces these complexities through a series of case studies. Using the role of *Médecins Sans Frontières* (*Doctors without Borders*) in Ethiopia's 1980s famine crisis, Weizman shows how the recognition of humanitarian relief has the potential to become lethal to the very people it seeks to serve.

In describing his dialogue with Rony Brauman, former president of MSF, Weizman notes;

"Brauman suspected that the promise of aid was being used by the Ethiopian regime to lure the inhabitants of the rebel zones into places from where they would be forcefully transferred." ²⁴

Reflecting on the situation himself, Brauman states;

"We were attracting people like bait in a trap. Local people knew they should never trust this violent, dictatorial government, but as aid workers were permanently dwelling in these so-called relief camps, [people] gained confidence and walked to them." ²⁵

Brauman concludes,

"in the case of Ethiopia, the aims of the NGOs and those of the totalitarians morphed into one another." ²⁶

In offering insight into such complex issues then, it seems one of our closest professional precedents comes from the field of medicine and the work of humanitarian organizations such as the *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC) and *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF/ *Doctors without Borders*) in particular.

Breaking from the ICRC's principals of neutrality, MSF was founded in 1971 in support of the principal of *le droit or devoir d'ingérence* ('the right to intervene'), a contentious legal notion which asserts the rights of humanitarian organizations or states to ignore the sovereignty of another state if there is a serious violation of humanitarian law. ²⁷ Not yet recognized in International Law, MSF teams working behind rebel lines in Ethiopia and Afghanistan practicing *le droit* therefore

did so illegally.²⁸ It is important to note that while *le droit* afforded a new means of flexibility to those striving to provide foreign assistance against a belligerent state's wishes, this same principal has also been used by Western countries with increasing regularity to justify their own foreign interventions, a concept which many view as a direct act of aggression against sovereignty.²⁹ Cautioning a universal embrace of humanitarian intervention and underscoring its increasing manipulation for political means, anthropologists Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi insightfully note;

“the humanitarianization of intervention implies the neutralization of conflict situations. Now it is as if the only issue were aid to victims, as if the local context presented no historical peculiarities, as if military operations did not originate in the defense of the interests of the states conducting them.”³⁰

While there is a lot to learn from practicing medical professionals about humanitarian relief, it is important to note that there are also differences, including variations in the ways services are provided, delivery timeframes and funding. Worth further investigation elsewhere is also how humanitarian medical aid and shelter provision interface with one another, both sharing and competing for resources while striving to provide the most effective means of assistance to those in need.

ETHICAL PRACTICE

In the absence of any overarching or aggrandizing solutions to the architect's ethical dilemma in humanitarian situations, I will end by considering a few practices which may aid a greater understanding of our ethical capacity. Perhaps the first and most important thing we should explicitly be doing collectively is reflecting more upon the products of our actions. It is essential that when engaging in dialogue around foreign intervention we become not only initially self-aware, but also self-reflective and critical of the greater sphere of our work through an ongoing appraisal of our completed projects. For practicing architects, the implications of such a process of perpetual awareness may mean that we need to collectively reassess the evaluation periods we assign to our work.

For practitioners, this would also mean introducing criticality not just around the relative design and construction efficiencies of a project –its uses of local materials, sense of environmental resiliency and appropriateness of programmatic functionality- but more generally around its organizational structures and networks of engaged stakeholders- a tall order in perpetually volatile situations.

An interesting example of this form of self-reflection can be seen from the art world in Dutch artist and Yale World Fellow Renzo Martens's 2008 film “*Episode III: Enjoy Poverty*”, which exposes the complexities of well-intentioned interveners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country where over 50% of the gross national income (GNI) comes from foreign aid.³¹ In doing so, Martens not only showcases the extreme poverty of the local Congolese and the various roles of intervening bodies- from photojournalists to aid workers- he also turns the camera back on himself, repositioning his role as foreign artist and critically framing it as equally implicated in his film's scathing commentary.

Martens's positioning sits in line with the further reflections of Spivak and Alcoff, who both advocate for actively acknowledging our foreign work's problematic complicity. With regards to representing the subaltern, Spivak suggests that such work involve a process of negotiation and critique from within the researcher, one which unsettles our dominant understandings;

ENDNOTES

- 1 See, for example: Jones, Bryn and Mike O'donnell, editors. *Sixties Radicalism and Social Movement Activism: Retreat or Resurgence?* New York: Anthem Press, 2010; Zeiger, Mimi. “The Interventionist's Toolkit, Part I-4.” *Places*, January 31, 2011; *DIY Urbanism*, SPUR San Francisco.
- 2 See, for example: Bell, Bryan. *Good Deeds, Good Design: Community Service Through Architecture*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2003; Lepik, Andres. *Small Scale, Big Change: New Architectures of Social Engagement*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010; Sinclair, Cameron. *Design Like You Give A Damn: Architectural Responses To Humanitarian Crises*. New York: Metropolis Books, 2006; Smith, Cynthia E., *Design For The Other 90%*. New York: Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 2007
- 3 See: Chatterjee, Deen K. & Don E. Scheid, ed. *Ethics and Foreign Intervention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*, translated by Kevin Attell. London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005; Holzgrefe, J.L., & Robert O. Keohane. *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal, and Political Dilemmas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Unclear efficacy of social architecture, For example see: Card, Kenton & Paul Jones. “Constructing ‘Social Architecture’: The Politics of Representing Practice” in *Architectural Theory Review*, 16:3, December 2011.
- 4 Singer, Mike. “The Architecture for Humanity Co-founder Sees New Architecture Clients Everywhere He Looks, from Tornado-ravaged Oklahoma to War-torn Afghanistan.” *AIA Practicing Architecture*. Accessed September 8, 2014. <http://www.aia.org/practicing/AIAB099436>.
- 5 Also the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, 2011 Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and 2012 Hurricane Sandy, to name a few.
- 6 See, for example: Badanes, Steve & Bryan Bell. *Expanding Architecture: Design as Activism*. New York: Metropolis Books, 2008; Lepik, Andres. *Small scale, big change: new architectures of social engagement*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010
- 7 Such publications include: Awan, Schneider and Till. *Spatial Agency: Other ways of Doing Architecture*; Hirsch and Miessen. *What is Critical Spatial Practice?*; Kaminer, Tahl and Maroš Krivý, eds. *The Participatory Turn in Urbanism*; Hou, Jeffrey. *Insurgent Public Space: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Remaking of Contemporary Cities*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- 8 A participatory process was particularly underscored in the work of organizations such as Architecture for Humanity, who were recognized with the 2006 TED Prize, the Curry Stone Design Prize Vision Award and various SEED International Awards. In turn, they have themselves issued awards for similar work. Their 2006 book “*Design Like You Give A Damn: Architectural Responses To Humanitarian Crises*” showcased 100 such projects from around the world.
- 9 While many felt this new social turn overstretched architects too much, demanding that they familiarize themselves with too broad a range of disciplines and societal concerns, others saw the profession slipping into obsolescence as everyday people were being ‘empowered’ through their own acts of design and aesthetics were becoming a secondary/superfluous consideration. See: Stickells, Lee, ed. “The Right To The City: Rethinking Architecture's Social Significance” in *Architectural Theory Review*, 16: 3, 2011. P. 213-227.
- 10 See, for example Schneider, Florian. “Collaboration: The Dark Site of the Multitude,” *Theory Kit 1.2* (February 6–10, 2006), <http://kit.kein.org/node/1>.
- 11 See *Welcome to Harmonistan*” lecture by Markus Miessen at Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, 09 October 2012, available online at <http://youtu.be/HtsbicOJ-jo>

- 12 For example, Weizman, Eyal. *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*. London: Verso, 2012. Which looks as such dilemmas in Israel-Palestine; Card, Kenton. "Democratic Social Architecture or Experimentation on the Poor?: Ethnographic Snapshots." *Design Philosophy Papers*, Vol. 9: 3, November 2011, pp. 217-234.
- 13 See Crewe, Emma & Elizabeth Harrison (1998) "Whose Development? An Ethnography of Aid" London: Zed, 1999.
- 14 Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988. 271-313.
- 15 Kapoor, Ilan. "Hyper-self-reflexive Development? Spivak on Representing the Third World 'Other'." *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2004): 627-47.
- 16 Alcoff, Linda. "The Problem of Speaking for Others" in *Cultural Critique*, 20, Winter 1991-1992, 5-32.
- 17 *Ibid.* p. 7
- 18 *Ibid.* p.24
- 19 Fathy, Hassan. *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973.
- 20 For example: Coward, Martin. *Urbicide: The Politics of Urban Destruction*; Gregory, Derek & Allan Richard, eds. *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence*; Graham, Stephen. *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism*; Misselwitz, Philipp & Tim Rieniets. *City of Collision: Jerusalem and the Principals of Conflict Urbanism*; Weizman, Eyal. *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*; Sorkin, Michael. *Indefensible Space: The Architecture of the National Insecurity State*.
- 21 Work on this topic has begun to emerge particularly out of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. See: Segal, Rafi & Eyal Weizman, eds. *A Civilian Occupation: The politics of Israeli Architecture*. Rev. ed. Tel Aviv; New York: Babel, 2003; Barclay, Ahmad & Dena Qaddumi. "On Strategies of Spatial Resistance in Palestine." *OpenSecurity*, 12 February 2013. <https://www.open-democracy.net/opensecurity/ahmad-barclay-dena-qaddumi/on-strategies-of-spatial-resistance-in-palestine/>;
- 22 As in war zones and conditions of military occupation, migrant detention centres, etc.
- 23 See ICAD's website: www.icahd.org
- 24 Weizman, Eyal. *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza*. London: Verso, 2011. P 29
- 25 *Ibid.* p. 29.
- 26 *Ibid.* p 36.
- 27 See: Sandoz, Yves. "'Droit' or 'devoir d'ingérence' and the right to assistance: the issues involved". 30-06-1992 Article, *International Review of the Red Cross*, No. 288. Available online at: <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/article/other/57jmaq.htm>
- 28 See: de Waal, Alex. "No Such Thing as Humanitarian Intervention" in *Harvard International Review*. 21-03-2007 Available online at: <http://hir.harvard.edu/archives/1482>
- 29 See: Sandoz, Yves. "'Droit' or 'devoir d'ingérence' and the right to assistance: the issues involved". 30-06-1992 Article, *International Review of the Red Cross*, No. 288. Available online at: <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/article/other/57jmaq.htm>

"Let us become vigilant about our own practice and use it as much as we can rather than make the totally counter-productive gesture of repudiating it."³²

The intervener themselves must become a subject of study.

For Martens, Spivak and Alcoff then, the overarching impetus is on our vigilance towards reflecting upon our complicities and giving them equal consideration to the primary body of work itself. Put succinctly by Professor David Fortin in relation to a cross-cultural architectural education;

"the architectural engagement with the 'other' is not necessarily confined to disaster relief and claims of altruistic efforts, but can extend to gaining awareness about our own architectural mental and ideological imprisonment and how we can do better."³³

In line with this, Spivak's further proposition of a process of 'unlearning' may also be of use. Here, she suggests that the subconscious prejudices (such as racism, classism, academic elitism, and ethnocentrism) are retraced and addressed by Western actors prior to their field work- in order for such individuals to cease viewing themselves as better positioned, or superior in their dominant systems of knowledge and representation. The desire is that through such processes, we might better move into discussion with those who we so actively seek to engage.

With regards to the issue of participation, Meissen promotes what he calls 'Conflictual Participation' as an alternative model, which moves away from aspirations of unanimous consensus toward a concept of conflict as productive enabler. He argues that a critical voice from outside the circle of vested interests is crucial to this process – an actor he terms the 'cross-bench practitioner' (borrowed from the political sphere) to suggest that one effective alternate means of foreign engagement for architects is not as designers, but as intermediaries;

"Becoming a vector in the force field of conflicts raises the question of how one can participate without catering to pre-established needs or tasks – or from the point of view of the traditional architect – of how it is possible to participate in for example, urban micro-politics by inserting friction and asking questions rather than doing local community work through existing public planning laws and economic deals with authorities."³⁵

Referencing the work of Belgian political philosopher Chantal Mouffe, Meissen explores the potential for an agonistic approach to participatory practice; a type of commonality that sees conflict as a form of constructive engagement.³⁶ Such an approach is exemplified through the work of *Forensic Architecture*, a team of architects, artists, filmmakers, activists, and theorists allied to Goldsmiths, University of London. One project, entitled '*Climate Crimes*', lead by architect Adrian Lahoud, draws upon scientific evidence to make visible the impact of industrialization in the global North to deprivation in the global South. The work feeds into legal cases being brought before the *International Criminal Court* (ICC) in The Hague, demonstrating Lahoud's use of his architectural background as a catalyst for "the assessment of spatial evidence and for its presentation in a legal and political setting."³⁷

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, by looking at humanitarian architecture through an ethical lens as well as through one focused on vernacular construction and community participation we may better assess such projects' overarching efficacy. Although subjective- and therefore admittedly problematic- our current means of gauging

'successfulness' seem in many instances to be missing the metrics which might help us to better appraise our ethical standing. Moving forward, this may very well mean that humanitarian projects can fail irrespective of their relative pure design successes and programmatic appropriateness. They may fail simply because of their usurpation by greater political, financial, or cultural forces.

While humanitarianism and activism remain fundamental components of architectural practice, they may also produce unethical and illegal conditions. This scrutinizing of foreign intervention therefore, is far from a rejection of architecture's humanitarian capacity, it is rather a critical re-positioning of our intrinsic humanitarianism.

Overall, three key things we can do to improve our ethical engagement when we explicitly decide to commence challenging work in foreign areas:

1. Reposition our role in relation to those we seek to work with by asking: "Am I willing to learn from them and listen to their desires, even if it means a complete reframing of my own original position?"
2. Be content in using our skills for means other than those that result in a physical building as the ultimate effective product. (such as by becoming Miessen's 'cross-bench practitioner')
3. Continue to undergo rigorous self-reflexivity, at multiple stages and from multiple perspectives.

Beyond the above-mentioned forms of self-reflection, in calling upon the ethical considerations of doctors, artists and anthropologists, this paper highlights an additional means toward improved practice; namely engaging with and learning from other disciplines confronting similar ethical dilemmas to our own.

Specifically, from them we may learn:

- Various approaches to ethically and politically declaring the explicit mandate of our work prior to its actualization.
- Effective means for establishing, maintaining and engaging with local stakeholders and what we should look for in such relationships.
- Ways of defining the temporal aspects of our work – both with regards to when they should commence (pre-humanitarian crisis? at the peak of the crisis? post-crisis? etc) and to how long they should last for (temporary emergency shelters? permanent refugee resettlements?). As architects, we will need to redefine such mandates on our own terms – but throughout that process, precedents from these other fields can be particularly of use.

It is worth noting that, beyond the immediate scope of this paper, other such complications in humanitarian architecture clearly exist, including around the ethics of architectural salaries tied to foreign development aid and the misappropriation of architectural research by hostile governments or militant movements

Before even debating our specific design approaches to architectural intervention in humanitarian situations then, it is important for us to ask ourselves: as an architect, how can I be an ethical 'agent'?

- 30 Fassin, Didier & Mariella Pandolfi, eds. *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of military and humanitarian interventions*. Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2010. P.13.
- 31 As reported by *Global Humanitarian Assistance for 2011*.
- 32 Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, New York: Routledge, 1990. p.11
- 33 See Fortin, David. *Other Places, Other Incentives. The African Spectacle in cross-cultural architectural education. African Architecture PWD*. Online: <https://sites.eca.ed.ac.uk/aapwd/david-fortin-other-places-other-incentives-a-reflection/>
- 34 *ibid.* p.9
- 35 See Miessen, Markus. "The Violence of Participation: Spatial Practices Beyond Models of Consensus" in *Fillip 7*, Winter 2008; Miessen, Markus, ed. *The Violence of Participation*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2007.
- 36 See Hirsch, Nikolaus & Markus Miessen, eds. "The Space of Agonism: Markus Miessen in Conversation with Chantal Mouffe." *Critical Spatial Practice 2*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012.
- 37 See *Forensic Architecture*: <http://www.forensic-architecture.org/>
- 38 Although, Weizman has begun documenting this trend in the *Occupied Palestinian Territories*. For example, see Weizman, Eyal. *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*. London: Verso, 2012