

# DESIGNING HUMANITARIAN FUTURES FOR..... FORCED DISPLACEMENT



PHOTO CREDIT: ROBERTO SALTORI

## PASTS

The Conference calls on all Parliaments and Governments to be conscious of their responsibility to protect refugees and to receive victims of political persecution as defined in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

- 78th Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

## PRESENTS

- 110 million individuals are forcibly displaced worldwide;
- They are highly vulnerable to physical, sexual, criminal & other violence;
- Humanitarians acknowledge this material-architectural vulnerability, but;
  - Lack architectural alternatives to temporary shelter designs;
  - Are limited by global supply chains and local contextual conditions;
  - Sometimes impose inappropriate Eurocentric architectures globally.
- As a result, the forcibly displaced are often mobile figures - moving from site to site, city to city, without adequate protection from violence.

## FUTURES

### CRITICAL

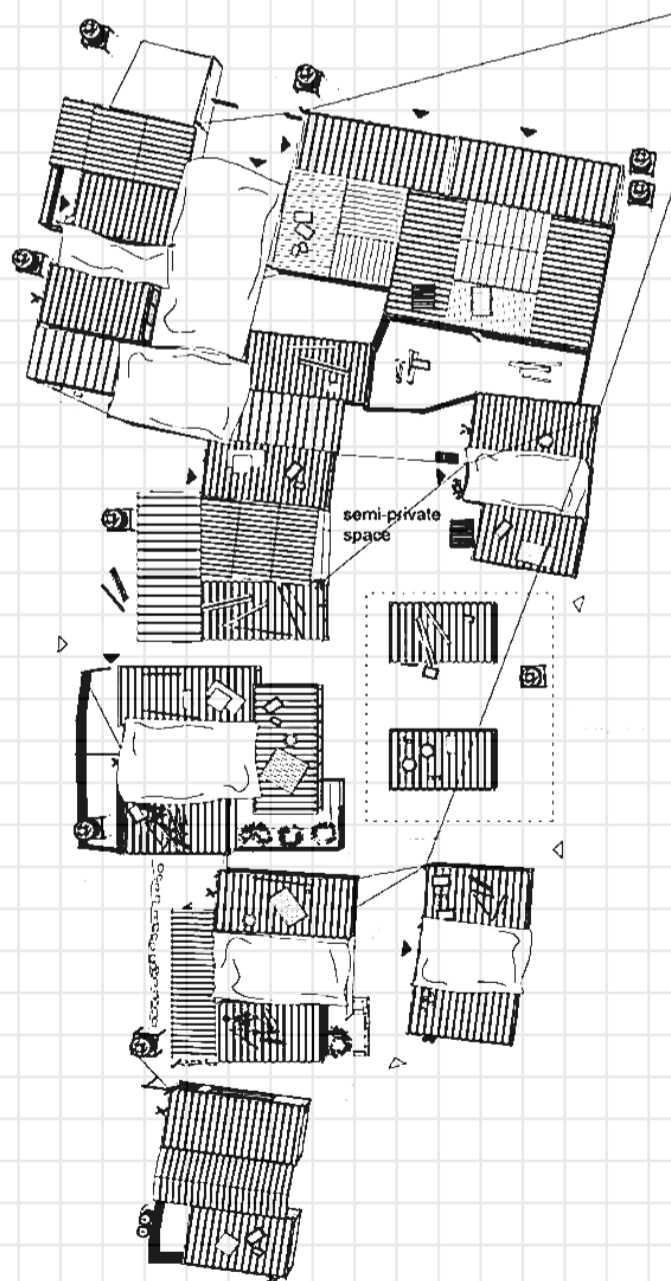
Can humanitarian design develop not only shelter for the forcibly displaced but active spaces, dwellings, or homes of protection, vitality, and community? Can humanitarian design acknowledge 'the refugee as architect'? Can humanitarian design develop 'cosmo-local' solutions to forced displacement?

### PRAGMATIC

How can better designs for forced displacement be localized in a globalized world? How can commercial actors help in this task without risking co-optation? How can the political concerns of host-country governments be reconciled with the need to radically better the lives of the forcibly displaced?

### SPECULATIVE

Designing spaces, dwellings, cities, and homes is about power. Is it possible for humanitarian design to disrupt the global hierarchies in which international humanitarians 'impose' designs — however well-intentioned — from above? Is a democratized form of humanitarian spatial design possible?



ABOVE: OVERHEAD VIEW OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD OF THE ZAAATARI REFUGEE CAMP, JORDAN, AND THE AD-HOC ASSEMBLING OF DWELLINGS. CREDIT: AYHAM DALAL.

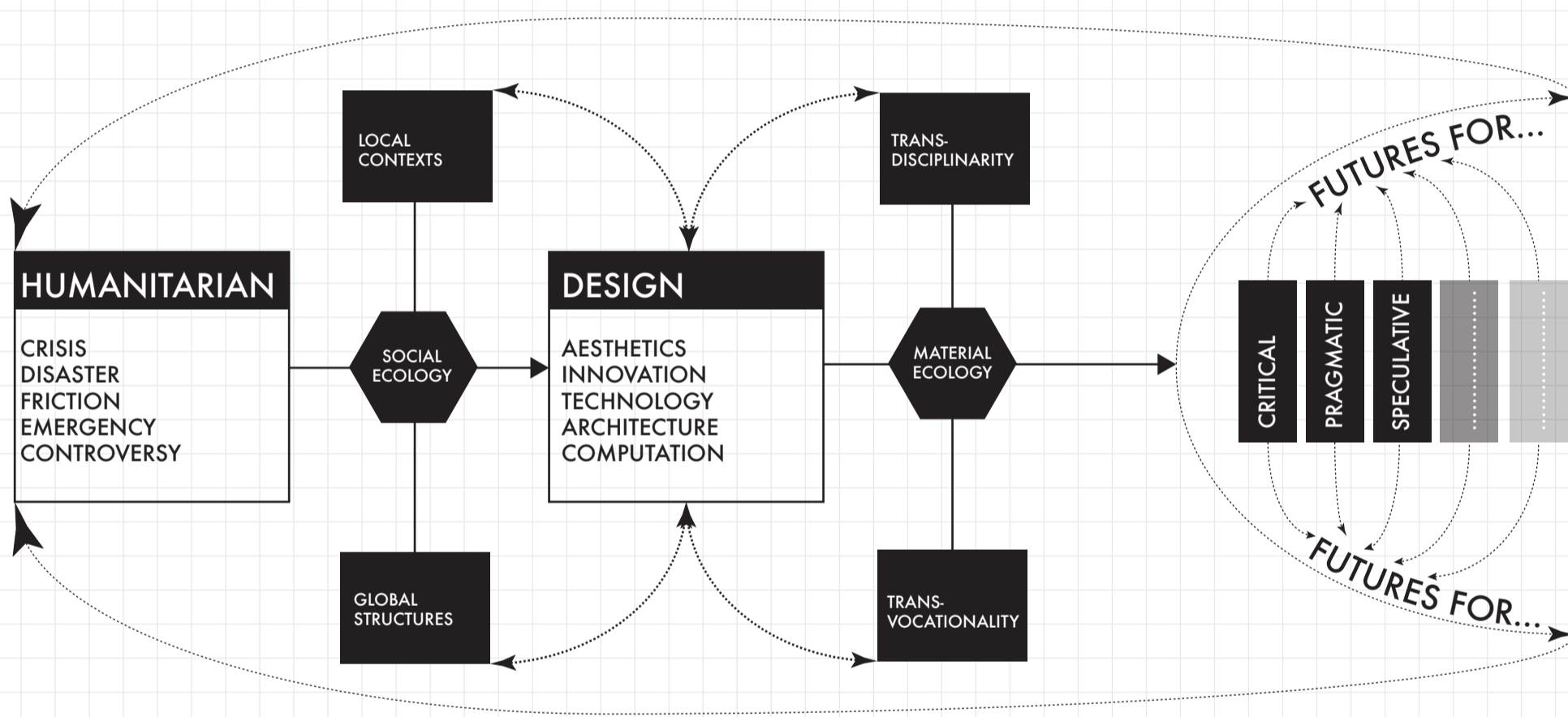
# WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN DESIGN ?

# 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.

## WHY?

Humanitarianism is in trouble. The crises it addresses are now more complex, protracted, and politicised. But political forces are increasingly unsympathetic, failing to adequately support humanitarian actors. Within this context, humanitarianism is undergoing a dramatic shift as it accelerates the integration of technology and 'design' practices into its work. This also faces difficulties. The integration of — for instance — machine learning techniques into humanitarian action is criticised for further distancing humanitarians from beneficiaries, reducing human beings to data-points, simply pixels on a satellite image. Equally, partnerships with commercial actors to improve — say — the architectural design of refugee shelters are criticised for subjecting humanitarianism to market logics. Nonetheless, humanitarian design is here to stay, especially as a tactic for mitigating the socio-political challenges the field faces. The demand of the day is thus simple: to excavate a series of hidden — critical yet pragmatic, speculative yet functional — futures for humanitarian design.



## WHAT?

HUD explores humanitarian design through a radical trans-disciplinary and transvocational ethos, synthesizing the insights of social scientists, architects, development engineers, and practitioners. We focus our research on violence prevention in three contexts: detention settings; situations of forced mobility, and aid compounds. We do so with a global perspective but conduct core collaborative research in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Colombia.

HUD's ultimate goal is to design material, technological, and architectural interventions that transcend the binaries that currently divide humanitarian design. Namely, we seek to develop interventions that are neither entirely critical nor entirely pragmatic, neither entirely politicized nor entirely depoliticized, neither entirely global ('one size fits all') nor entirely parochial. Instead, HUD seeks to open up different futures that disrupt such binaries in humanitarian design.

## WHO?

HUD's core research is led through a collaboration between the Geneva Graduate Institute, the University of Copenhagen, HEAD - Genève, and the EssentialTech Lab at EPFL Lausanne. HUD's work also integrates humanitarian practitioners from leading organizations and key partnerships with research institutions in Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our work is supported by a Swiss National Science Foundation Sinergia grant.

HUD is also cultivating a wider research collective drawing on the insights of scholars, practitioners, and civil society groups who push the boundaries of humanitarian design. Indeed, HUD is an open and experimental initiative. We embrace an agile approach to integrating the needs of diverse, sometimes conflictual, stakeholders, as well as an openness to taking risks and shifting directions to better explore the many possible futures for humanitarian design.

WWW.HUMANITARIAN.DESIGN