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# The messy practice of decolonising a concept: Everyday humanitarianism in Tanzania

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## Abstract

This article[1] explores the messy practice of decolonising a concept through collaborative work between scholars researching together the meaning of everyday humanitarianism in Tanzania. Humanitarianism is typically understood as the state-centric, formal, Northern-driven helping of distant others in crisis. Using the concept of everyday humanitarianism, our article challenges these assumptions in three ways. First, it explores the everyday humanitarian actions of ordinary citizens in times of crisis. Second, it explores these responses in a Southern context. Third, it focuses explicitly on the givers and not only the receivers of humanitarian help. Our work grounds decolonisation in the actual practices of research aimed at theory building as an iterative back-and-forth exchange with particular attention to power, rather than as a transplant of Northern theory on the South, or its opposite. Our first argument is that the objective of collaborative research to capture the local politics of giving and then use these practices to interrogate the theoretical concept of everyday humanitarianism can be decolonising. Second, we argue that the practices of the academic labour that produces knowledge or inductive theory can also be decolonising. Understanding both the challenges and the possibilities of decolonising 'humanitarianism' will provide an opportunity to document and thus legitimate the complexity that is inherent in decolonising a discipline.

## Introduction

Decolonisation is at the outset a recognition of a prior state of colonisation. The latter refers to a conceptual discourse that is not merely dominant but domineering and subordinating. Such domineering coloniality[2] has, over a historical period extending to the present, been facilitated by and intertwined with the global reach of imperialism and the sense of superiority of the Global North. Decolonisation is therefore an act of changing both the domineering conceptualisation and practice of the North. The elements of such decolonisation include a rethinking of concepts and discourses that have colonial characteristics; a critical understanding of the inequality of academic influence and power embedded in research and discourse; collaborative research between

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[1]This article is a product of creative co-authorship as articulated by Lisa Tilley, 'Resisting piratic method by doing research otherwise', *Sociology*, 51:1 (2017), pp. 27–42 in which our writing team discussed the dispersal of epistemic authority and academic prestige *vis-à-vis* our university careers and decided on the authoring of this work. Other EHTZ team members have contributed insights as noted.

[2]Anibal Quijano, 'Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America', *International Sociology*, 15:2 (2000), pp. 215–32; Anibal Quijano, 'Coloniality and modernity/rationality', *Cultural Studies*, 21:2–3 (2007), pp. 168–78.

Northern and Southern scholars working to redress these inequalities; and a greater incorporation of non-elitist studies in Southern settings. While the first two elements provide the usual conceptual and theoretical media of decolonising intervention, the last two enrich such intervention with actual research practice. Many concepts and endeavours to study them have colonial thinking embedded in them, and therefore they need decolonisation. Humanitarianism is one of them.

Humanitarianism is a highly contested concept that for some critics exemplifies 'white saviourism' in the realm of formal institutions,[3] yet for others it is a transcendental response to create a global spirit by manifesting an ethics of care across borders.[4] Most prominent histories of humanitarianism focus on the global level and privilege nation-state boundaries. In contrast, rethinking what it means to help when duty and compassion are linked across subnational borders is needed in contexts where states were created through colonialism. Our article is an exploratory exercise towards the redress needed for European colonial and imperial histories, requiring 'a reconstruction of the categories and concepts through which modern inequalities are understood.'[5]

The 'humanitarian system' results from the liberal order of the American century and the maintenance of colonialism and empire, and it produces a form of ordering and othering that has been significantly challenged by critical scholars.[6] Still, in the literature on humanitarianism, there is a chasm between the political scientists who focus on the humanitarian apparatus (legal, logistical, or political), the anthropologists who focus on the experience of individual recipients ('refugees', 'victims', or 'the poor'), and the geographers who focus on humanitarian space. None of these gives much attention to the agency of Southern givers as humanitarians themselves or to what it might mean to include them in how humanitarianism is conceptualised. Decolonising is not solely about inclusion, and messiness can be a necessary disruption to inadequacies of ordering. Decolonising International Relations (IR) is about changing the terms we use to know the world. If calls for global social theory made by scholars such as Gurminder K. Bhambra[7] and others are to be implemented in International Studies scholarship, we need to get busy with the messy practice of decolonising the concepts we use to build our theories explaining relationships of 'helping'. In this article, we will chart the messiness of decolonising humanitarianism through our collaborative work on everyday humanitarianism.[8] Note that this is not 'messy' because it is a phenomenon that takes place in some imaginary of disorganised or undergoverned spaces, but is instead a purposive conceptualisation of how theories can be disenchanted from their reification of parsimony.

In the following text, we develop a twofold argument about the messy practice of decolonising a concept like humanitarianism. Our first argument is that the objective of the collaborative research to capture the local politics of giving and then use these practices to interrogate the theoretical concept of everyday humanitarianism can be decolonising. Building theory from concepts developed through actual empirical research in the global South can be a practice of decolonising both humanitarianism and everyday humanitarianism. Second, we argue that the actual academic labour that produces knowledge, or in this case, inductive theory, can also be a decolonising practice. If academic labour can be colonising, then it can also be decolonising as reflective agents in the

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[3]Adia Benton, 'Ebola at a distance: A pathographic account of anthropology's relevance', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 90:2 (2017), pp. 495–524.

[4]Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY and London, UK: Cornell University Press, 2011).

[5]Gurminder K. Bhambra and John Holmwood, *Colonialism and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2021), p. 7.

[6]Fiori Juliano, Fernando Espada, Andrea Rigon, Bertrand Taithe, and Rafia Zakaria (eds), *Amidst the Debris: Humanitarianism and the End of Liberal Order* (London, UK: Hurst and Co., 2021).

[7]Because of space constraints, we do not reiterate the arguments made from postcolonial and decolonial perspectives (see the other contributions to this forum and Gurminder Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity: Post Colonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2007); Gurminder Bhambra, *Connected Sociologies* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2014) but focus instead on our own practices and concepts.

[8]Lisa Ann Richey, 'Conceptualizing everyday humanitarianism: Ethics, affects and practices of contemporary global helping', *New Political Science*, 40:4 (2018), pp. 625–39; Lisa Ann Richey, 'Humanitarianism', *International Political Economy of Everyday Life*, available at: {http://i-peel.org/homepage/humanitarianism/} accessed 29 January 2018.

process of relationships of knowledge creation reorient their collaborations towards rebalancing power asymmetries.

Everyday humanitarianism makes helping in times of crisis about people. More than just developing a concept, decolonising a concept requires attention to the process itself and collaboration by scholars trained in and working from the Global South. Furthermore, the colonial elements that constitute humanitarianism as a research and practice field also constitute the study of this field. Therefore, we argue that research collaboration is a particularly important step in decolonising both the study of humanitarianism and the concepts that underpin the work. Because humanitarianism is relational – based on a problematic desire to 'help' others across borders in times of crisis – then understanding it should also be relational. It must be done by scholars whose thinking is crafted by different placements and understandings of these borders that are to be not just crossed, but also decolonised.

The article is structured as follows: first, we present the field of humanitarianism and how it is studied. Then we introduce our concept of 'everyday humanitarianism' and how it is 'stretched', or changed as it travels from a North-South humanitarian trajectory to a South-South trajectory in Tanzania. Then we examine the existing humanitarian literature on Tanzania, which does not explore how helping is theorised, but how people respond to disaster. Next, we present some propositions about using the concept everyday humanitarianism in practice as a way forward in decolonising through practices and struggles undertaken in collaboration. Finally, we conclude on the importance of remaking theories and concepts from a South-based perspective as a practice-centred process of decolonising in international studies.

## The messy process of decolonising a field and the study of that field

By claiming that a field, humanitarianism, needs decolonising, we are simultaneously recognising that it is a field that was formerly colonised, and that knowledge assumed to be apolitical, objective, or universal was not. Studying international intervention in Mozambique, Meera Sabaratnam argues that 'interventions fail – *and keep failing* – because they are constituted through structural relations of colonial difference which intimately shape their conception, operation and effects.' This interpretation emerges from an examination of the underlying dynamics of hierarchical presence, disposability, entitlement, and dependency, which characterise intervention.[9] From this premise, our own theorisation around everyday humanitarianism will remain political, rooted in particular subjectivities instead of in detached universal claims making. However, instead of completely rejecting humanitarianism because it is fundamentally tainted by colonialism and racism,[10] we engage in what Alex Broadbent calls 'critical decolonisation'[11] of the concept. We do this by bringing in the everyday in order to attempt Rutazibwa's call for a decolonised perspective to 'contribute to an understanding of the relevance of the good intentions of humanitarians to the aspirations of their intended "beneficiaries"'.[12]

Our approach to decolonisation debates is theoretical, and the empirical evidence we are putting forward is illustrative. Generally, decolonisation originates from prior existence of colonisation leading to a fundamental imbalance of power, and decolonisation promises the potential

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[9]Meera Sabaratnam, *Decolonising Intervention: International Statebuilding in Mozambique* (London, UK and New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017), p. 4.

[10]Polly Pallister-Wilkins, 'Humanitarianism: Race and the overrepresentation of "man"', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (2022), pp. 1–4; Polly Pallister-Wilkins, *Humanitarian Borders: Unequal Mobility and Saving Lives* (London, UK: Verso, 2022); Polly Pallister-Wilkins, 'Saving the souls of white folk: Humanitarianism as white supremacy', *Security Dialogue*, 52:S (2021), pp. 98–106.

[11]Alex Broadbent, 'It Will Take Critical, Thorough Scrutiny to Truly Decolonise Knowledge', The Conversation (2017), available at: {https://theconversation.com/it-will-take-critical-thorough-scrutiny-to-truly-decolonise-knowledge-78477} accessed 15 September 2021.

[12]Olivia Umurerwa Rutazibwa, 'What's there to mourn? Decolonial reflections on (the end of) liberal humanitarianism', *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs*, 1:1 (2019), pp. 65–7.

to rebalance the power asymmetry.[13] We agree that the how, to what extent, and with what means decolonisation of humanitarianism is to be achieved is not yet clear.[14] But we draw on scholars who understand decolonisation as 'both a political and epistemological movement' gesturing towards an attainment of ecologies of knowledges, recognition of the different ways of knowing by which people across the human globe provide meaning to their existence and understanding of the world and pluriversality, a concept that challenges the 'one-dimensional solutions to diverse problems and impositions of universal claims to the very nature of humanity'.[15] Some scholars, including our own collaborators, might suggest that what is needed is a reconstitution of knowledges from local or indigenous concepts only. However, our focus on the politics of knowledge production applies to all forms of humanitarian sense making, from *ujamaa*[16] to everyday humanitarianism. So, this also means accepting that indigenous knowledge systems also rest within and resonate from politics and thus might not lead to quick-fix decolonisation.[17]

Applied to the discourse on humanitarianism, decolonising means 'giving back agency and leadership to people it serves, combatting its embedded structural racism or decentralising its power and resources to local humanitarian actors.[18] Contrary to 'localisation' arguments,[19] decolonising humanitarianism is to give power and agency to local givers as humanitarian actors as opposed to a state-centric, formal, Northern-driven helping. As Parasram in this collection argues, however, these debates on sovereignty linked to the nation-state are deeply rooted in IR, and fundamental to decolonising practices. We apply the concept of everyday humanitarianism to challenge these notions of humanitarianism in order to bring on board actions by ordinary Tanzanians, what Tammam Aloudat and Themrise Khan call 'the invisible force of who is first on the scene of any disaster, but who is never recognised for upholding humanitarianism.[20] In the process of decolonising humanitarianism, we hope to shed light on 'social experiences generated in the majority world'[21] through a practice-based approach to knowledge[22] on everyday humanitarianism in Tanzania.

Our focus is on an academic process of decolonising knowledge through research collaboration on everyday humanitarianism, a concept that one of the authors introduced in work that included the attention to everyday practices, but remained fixed within a North-South helping context.[23] Through stretching the concept of everyday humanitarianism, we take into account its context in and implications.[24] As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues 'theories generated from the exploration and exploitation of colonies, and of the people who had prior ownership of these lands, formed the totalizing appropriation of the Other.'[25] Thus, one important aspect of theory building and

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[13]Tammam Aloudat and Themrise Khan, 'Decolonising Humanitarianism or Humanitarian Aid?', available at: {https://speakingofmedicine.plos.org/2021/07/13/decolonising-humanitarianism-or-humanitarian-aid/} accessed 16 May 2022.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'Discourses of decolonization/decoloniality', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 55:3 (2019), pp. 201–26 (p. 300).

[16]Ujamaa means 'familyhood' and has formed the basis for both formal national policies of independent Tanzania under the 1967 Arusha Declaration and is still used to refer to unity in times of struggle. See particularly Issa G. Shivji, Saida Yahya-Othman, and Ng'wanza Kamata, *Development as Rebellion: A Biography of Julius Nyerere*, Vol. 3 (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2020).

[17]Broadbent, 'It Will Take Critical, Thorough Scrutiny to Truly Decolonise Knowledge'.

[18]Aloudat and Khan, 'Decolonising Humanitarianism or Humanitarian Aid?

[19]For the problems with these, see Elisa Pascucci, 'The local labour building the international community: Precarious work within humanitarian spaces', *EPA: Economy and Space*, 51:3 (2019), pp. 743–60; Adia Benton, 'African expatriates and race in the anthropology of humanitarianism', *Critical African Studies*, 8:3 (2016), pp. 266–77.

[20]Aloudat and Khan, 'Decolonising Humanitarianism or Humanitarian Aid?'.

[21]Raewyn Connell, *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), p. 64.

[22]Raewyn Connell, Fran Collyer, João Maia, and Robert Morrell, 'Toward a global sociology of knowledge: Post-colonial realities and intellectual practices', *International Sociology*, 32:1 (2017), pp. 21–37.

[23]Richey, 'Conceptualizing everyday humanitarianism'; Richey, 'Humanitarianism'.

[24]Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London, UK: Zed Books, 2012), p. ix.

[25]Ibid., p. 69.

concept stretching is to disentangle the power relationships and assumptions that were involved in the appropriation of data to support de-linked theory. Context is understood not as another place, but as a shared reality in which researchers and respondents inhabit together, but often within different power relations can be a useful decolonising practice. As our title suggests, this process remains unfinished and messy because decolonising a concept without retreating into relativism or relinquishing its power for generalisability takes time.

## Humanitarianism and everyday humanitarianism

Humanitarian responses to disaster, poverty, or pandemics have been around since antiquity, but humanitarianism as a field has a more recent history linked to international aid, non-governmental organisations, and other 'humanitarian' actors. Humanitarian assistance is by definition 'international' but it has most often been regarded as a North-South endeavour.[26] The humanitarian norms around the core principles of humanitarian action – humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence – also originate in the Global North.[27] In his history of humanitarianism, Michael Barnett traces the more recent expansion of humanitarian space from the nineteenth century approach of governing war suffering to the twentieth and twenty-first-century nebulous interventions on behalf of an assumed shared humanity. Critics from different disciplines argue that intervention in the domestic affairs within states on the grounds of a shared humanity serves to support the interests of powerful elites and undermine the moral basis of human rights on which this intervention is predicated.[28] This leads to 'depoliticising' or to a different kind of politics: from a 'politics of compassion'[29] to a 'politics of testimony'[30] or a 'politics of disapprobation'.[31] Historians argue that the friction between humanitarianism and human rights has deep theoretical roots,[32] which complicate interventions by citizens or private actors as well as those by states.[33] Still, all these understandings reproduce the presumption that international interveners and local recipients are creating the politics. This is why the concept of humanitarianism needs to be critically decolonised.

Our approach to this is through using a newer concept of *everyday humanitarianism*[34] that links together the expanded realm of actions and emotions in the everyday lives of real people as they engage in responding to suffering through practices outside of the formal structures of humanitarian actions.[35] In this section, we present the concept of everyday humanitarianism and how

[26]Julia Pacitto and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 'Writing the "Other" into Humanitarian Discourse: Framing Theory and Practice in South–South Humanitarian Responses to Forced Displacement', Refugee Studies Centre Working Paper Series No. 93 (2013), pp. 1–38.

[27]Zeynep Sezgin and Dennis Dijkzeul, 'Introduction: New humanitarians getting old?', in Zeynep Sezgin and Dennis Dijkzeul (eds), *The New Humanitarians in International Practice* (London, UK: Routledge, 2016), p. 3.

[28]See Roberto Belloni, 'The trouble with humanitarianism', *Review of International Studies*, 33:3 (2007), pp. 451–74; Peter Redfield, 'The unbearable lightness of ex-pats: Double binds of humanitarian mobility', *Cultural Anthropology*, 27:2 (2012), pp. 358–82; Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London, UK: Zed Books, 2014); Miriam Ticktin, 'Transnational humanitarianism', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 43:1 (2014), pp. 273–89.

[29]Ticktin, 'Transnational humanitarianism'.

[30]Didier Fassin, 'The humanitarian politics of testimony: Subjectification through trauma in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict', *Cultural Anthropology*, 23:3 (2008), pp. 531–58.

[31]Aditi Surie von Czechowski, 'It is Important to Talk about Soap, but Can We Talk about the Rights of Women?: Teaching Human Rights in Nyarugusu Camp', paper presented at the International Conference on Everyday Humanitarianism, London School of Economics (14–15 April 2016).

[32]Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*.

[33]See Tehila Sasson, 'Milking the Third World? Humanitarianism, capitalism, and the moral economy of the Nestle boycott', *American Historical Review*, 121:4 (2016), pp. 1196–224.

[34]Richey, 'Conceptualizing everyday humanitarianism'; Richey, 'Humanitarianism', *International Political Economy of Everyday Life*.

[35]For accessible histories of humanitarianism, see Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*; Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss, 'Humanitarianism: A brief history of the present', in Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss (eds), *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power and Ethics* (Ithaca, NY and London, UK: Cornell University Press, 2008).

it has travelled from a North-South humanitarian trajectory to Tanzania. Political science scholarship on the 'local turn' has set a precedent for calling attention to everyday humanitarianism. Notably, Mark Duffield has studied the inside of what he terms 'the aid industry' from an everyday perspective.[36] Other scholars assert that the 'micro-moves' in IR theory to integrate affect, space, and time are intellectually productive for understanding contemporary global and local politics.[37]

The 'everyday' micro-move has been applied to humanitarianism by Dorothea Hilhorst and Bram J. Jansen who focus on practices of aid delivery as constituting 'humanitarian space' noting that 'the humanitarian arena is not "out there" but is created by agencies, media and other stakeholders.'[38] In peacebuilding and postconflict studies, scholars such as Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond have advocated for a 'local turn' as a critique of the hegemonic, hierarchical, and exclusionary ideas and practices that constitute the more mainstream liberal peace approach.[39] However, this has not gone unchallenged. Elisa Randazzo argues that 'the notion of the everyday can be understood as a double-edged sword, one that has indeed challenged the rigidity of the liberal peace, but one that has been severely hindered by its biased and ambiguous relationship with both its anti-foundationalist roots and normative aspirations.'[40]

Everyday humanitarianism as a concept originated in the Global North,[41] and this limited its utility to understand the global practices of 'helping' and their complexity. It referred to how 'helping' has become mediatised and marketised. An example of this is looking at how social media campaigns for humanitarian organisations must rely on likes and shares, and how causes are now branding themselves through products and celebrity supporters.[42] Businesses, consumers, and NGOs are linked in 'partnerships'[43] that provide humanitarian help, often outside the formal humanitarian structures. As part of our efforts to decolonise humanitarianism, we shift the focus from the Global North to the Global South and attempt to rethink these everyday practices. In doing so, we might identify different forms of helping, a better understanding of locally sanctioned ways of doing good, and or different configurations of 'partnership' that may involve private and public actors, from different businesses or governments.

Humanitarianism is often explored in a North-South perspective, assuming that organisations funded and dominated by the Global North carry out humanitarian acts of 'rescue' in the Global South.[44] Furthermore, humanitarianism is mostly assumed to be carried out by (international) organisations and focused on recipients. Our research collaboration on everyday humanitarianism in Tanzania challenges these assumptions in three ways. First, it explores the everyday humanitarian actions of ordinary citizens in times of crisis. Second, our research explores these responses in

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[36]Mark R. Duffield, 'Risk-management and the fortified aid compound: Everyday life in post-interventionary society', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 4:4 (2010), pp. 453–74.

[37]Ty Solomon and Brent J. Steele, 'Micro-moves in International Relations theory', *European Journal of International Relations*, 23:2 (2016), pp. 267–91.

[38]Dorothea Hilhorst and Bram J. Jansen, 'Humanitarian space as arena: A perspective on the everyday politics of aid', *Development and Change*, 41:6 (2010), pp. 1117–39.

[39]Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver P. Richmond, 'The local turn in peace building: A critical agenda for peace', *Third World Quarterly*, 34:5 (2013), pp. 763–83.

[40]Elisa Randazzo, 'The paradoxes of the "everyday": Scrutinising the local turn in peace building', *Third World Quarterly*, 37:8 (2016), pp. 1351–70.

[41]Richey, 'Conceptualizing everyday humanitarianism'.

[42]Denis Kennedy, 'Selling the distant other: Humanitarianism and imagery – ethical dilemmas of humanitarian action', *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, 28 (2009), pp. 1–25; Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte, *Brand Aid: Shopping Well to Save the World* (Minneapolis, MA: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2013).

[43]See contributions to the Special Issue by Mette Fog Olwig (ed.), 'Commodifying humanitarian sentiments? The black box of the for-profit and non-profit partnership', *World Development*, 105536 (2021), Contributions by Mette Fog Olwig; Elisa Pascucci; and Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte.

[44]Patricia Daley, 'Rescuing African bodies: Celebrities, consumerism and neoliberal humanitarianism', *Review of African Political Economy*, 40:137 (2013), pp. 375–93 (p. 389).

a Southern context, not through the typical Northern perspective. Third, we focus explicitly on the givers and not just on the receivers of humanitarian help.

## Understanding humanitarianism in Tanzania

In Africa, the evolution of humanitarianism in theory and practice is 'incomplete without an understanding of its place in and relationship to, conflicts and disasters'.[45] Tanzanians respond regularly to both acute and protracted crises in the country. Tanzania is reported as having experienced 65 disasters during recent decades (1997–2017) including floods, earthquakes, droughts, storms, and epidemics.[46] The country currently hosts 247,384 refugees mainly coming from Burundi and Democratic Republic of the Congo. Tanzania is the largest recipient of Burundian refugees in the region[47] and political tensions continue around repatriation as refugees are hosted in several camps mostly in Kigoma region in which 52 per cent are in Nyarugusu camp.[48] Floods have also become the most-feared disaster among Dar es Salaam residents according to Hambati and Gaston's participatory hazards ranking.[49] We explore the existing literature on Tanzania even though it does not include how helping is theorised, but how people respond to disaster. The limits of this literature reflect the unequal knowledge production in which Tanzania is a field for providing data, but not theory.

Generally, scholars have focused on three main areas of humanitarianism in Tanzania. The first is the scholarship focusing on policies and practices relating to the administration of humanitarian assistance.[50] Indigenous practices of disaster management are documented by Hambati's work on how local people in Kagera relied on a combination of formal and informal knowledges for geo-disaster management.[51] Hossea M. M. Rwegoshora explores how institutions in Tanzania work to respond to social security challenges, including how global issues like natural disasters are managed as people struggle for their livelihood.[52] Michèle Morel focuses on a framework for refugee burden sharing in Tanzania arguing that 'there is a lack of international refugee burden-sharing, as evidenced by the lack of an international legal framework for durable solutions for refugees.'[53] Opportuna Kweka's work examines a 'refugee caring regime', which is contained by the geography of a 'crisis' but embedded in politics of care and regulation from individual bodies of people living in camps to global bodies like the UNHCR.[54]

[45]Christina Bennett, Matthew Foley, and Hanna B. Krebs, 'Learning from the Past to Shape the Future: Lessons from the History of Humanitarian Action in Africa', Humanitarian Policy Group, Working Paper (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2016).

[46]UNDRR, 'Country Reports on Public Investment for Planning for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020', available at: {https://reliefweb.int/report/united-republic-tanzania/united-republic-tanzania-risk-sensitive-budget-review} accessed 24 September 2021.

[47]UNHCR, United Republic of Tanzania: Latest Updates', available at: {https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/tza} accessed 22 November 2022. See also {https://reporting.unhcr.org/tanzania#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20the%20United%20Republic,and%20the%20surrounding%20host%20communities} accessed 22 November 2022.

[48]Nyarugusu camp was opened in 1996. It is one of the world's most isolated refugee camps, 65 kilometers from Kasulu town, and approximately a four-hour drive from Kigoma the regional capital.

[49]Herbert Hambati and Greg Gaston, 'Revealing the vulnerability of urban communities to flood hazard in Tanzania: A case of the Dar es Salaam city ecosystem', International Journal of Geospatial and Environmental Research, 2:1 (2015), Article 3.

[50]Allen Armstrong, 'Evolving approaches to planning and management of refugee settlements: The Tanzanian experience', Ekistics, 57:342/343 (1990), pp. 195–204; Bonaventure Rutinwa, 'The marginalization of local relief capacity in Tanzania', in Monica K. Juma and Astri Suhrke (eds), Eroding Local Capacity: International Humanitarian Action in Africa (Uppsala, Sweden: Nordic Africa Institute, 2002).

[51]Herbert Hambati, 'Invisible resilience: Indigenous knowledge systems of earthquake disaster management in Kagera Region, Tanzania', Utafiti, 16 (2021), pp. 247–70.

[52]Hossea M. M. Rwegoshora, Social Security Challenges in Tanzania: Transforming the Present Protecting the Future (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2016).

[53]Michèle Morel, 'The lack of refugee burden-sharing in Tanzania: Tragic effects', Afrika Focus, 22:1 (2009), pp. 107–14.

[54]Opportuna Leo Kweka, 'The Impact of Structural Adjustment Program on the Refugee Policy in Tanzania: Implications for Survival Strategies of Burundian Refugees in Camps' (PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 2007).

The second area of scholarship focuses on international actors and government agencies. Governments and international and domestic organisations are dominant actors in humanitarian responses in Tanzania. As such, research on humanitarianism has focused on formal humanitarian structures.[55] This has not only examined North-South linkages but also includes Tanzania's participation as a donor and recipient in South-South humanitarian assistance. For example, Andrew Coulson documents Tanzania's turn to South-South exchanges at the end of the 2000s, particularly as then President Kikwete looked to the East Asian Tigers for manufacturing and planning approaches.[56] Still, this research does not recognise informal responses by ordinary citizens outside the confines of legal provisions such as the National Disaster Management Policy of 2004,[57] the Disaster Management Act No. 7 of 2015[58] and the Disaster Management Regulations of 2017.[59] These legal statutes establish national platforms for disaster risk reduction and disaster management committees from regional to village administrative levels. Individual agency is contextualised within politics, geography and history. For Tanzanians, this speaks also to donor relations. Landau's work on 'the humanitarian hangover' explains how Tanzania's socialist history has been foundational for the ways that citizens 'turn demands away from the state and towards international actors, while still reifying the virtues and identity of being 'Tanzanian'.[60] The Tanzanian state is new in coordinating humanitarianism. For example, the guiding law, Disaster Management Act 7, that sets in place the institutions and arrangements at the national, regional, district, ward, and village levels, dates only to 2015. It establishes a 'Disaster Management Fund' so any person who wants to contribute should first report to these 'Disaster Management Committees' intended to coordinate local humanitarian efforts. The law refers only to formal humanitarian organisations and services and makes no mention of individuals. Also, the law targets only 'natural' disasters, which leaves out those occurring due to conflict. More contemporary research is needed to understand how Tanzanians take on the 'virtuous' practices of helping when they are in situations of crisis, both 'natural' and human-made.

The third area of scholarship, and that of most interest to everyday humanitarianism, focuses on local effects of humanitarian interventions on Tanzanian communities. Herbert Hambati and Greg Gaston demonstrate how social relations and status correlate with risk vulnerability in their studies of Dar es Salaam.[61] Beth Elise Whitaker[62] and Loren B. Landau[63] did foundational research on how host communities 'framed' refugees, how they gained from them economically, and how this transformed their own identities and relations to the state. Landau sees refugees and humanitarian assistance as agents potentially affecting both short-term material and long-term sociopolitical transformations of refugee host communities in Western Tanzania's Kasulu District.[64] But other scholars focus on the impediments faced by local non-governmental actors' response to the localisation of humanitarian assistance and refugee protection initiatives in Tanzania.[65] They recommend a need to investigate the role of the local faith-based organisations, traditional leaders,

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[55]Rutinwa, 'The marginalization of local relief capacity in Tanzania'; Loren Landau, 'Beyond the losers: Transforming governmental practice in refuge-affected Tanzania', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 16 (2003), pp. 19–43.

[56]Andrew Coulson, *Tanzania: A Political Economy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[57]United Republic of Tanzania, 'National Disaster Management Policy' (Dar es Salaam: Prime Minister's Office, 2004).

[58]United Republic of Tanzania, 'The Disaster Management Act' No. 7 (2015), available at: {http://parliament.go.tz/polis/uploads/bills/acts/1452062258-ActNo-7-2015-Book-1-10.pdf} accessed 4 July 2022.

[59]United Republic of Tanzania, 'Disaster Management Regulations' (Dar es Salaam: Prime Minister's Office, 2017).

[60]Loren B. Landau, *The Humanitarian Hangover: Displacement, Aid, and Transformation in Western Tanzania* (Johannesburg, SA: Wits University Press, 2008).

[61]Hambati and Gaston, 'Revealing the vulnerability of urban communities to flood hazard in Tanzania'.

[62]Beth Elise Whitaker, 'Talking about the neighbors: The discourse on refugees in Tanzanian politics', *African Review of Foreign Policy*, 4:1 (2006), pp. 24–44.

[63]Landau, *The Humanitarian Hangover*.

[64]Landau, 'Beyond the losers'.

[65]Merve Erdilmen and Witness Ayesiga Sosthenes, 'Opportunities and Challenges for Localization of Humanitarian Action in Tanzania', Local Engagement Refugee Research Network Paper No. 8 (2020).

and host populations themselves on the localisation processes without fundamentally problematising the ways localisation has been implemented. To move beyond the existing literature, we need research focusing on the subnational level and particularly on how both individuals and groups manoeuvre in the exceptional space of disaster[66] and how this might change when acute crises become protracted. Our team's work has begun this journey through the empirical case of COVID-19 management through South-South humanitarianism in the case study of a pan-African remedy that was deeply embroiled in global and Tanzanian politics of humanitarianism.[67]

## The concept and its mess: Everyday humanitarianism in Tanzania

Humanitarian aid and professional disaster response receive attention, yet what is missing is the action taken in response to both protracted and acute humanitarian crises by Tanzanians who are not humanitarian professionals. Everyday humanitarianism is distinct from charity, compassion, or generosity by its context of crisis, so while the practices might be 'everyday' their meaning is extraordinary as dictated by the 'emergency'.[68] This may involve, for example, housing refugees along their journey to processing centres, paying school fees for additional children in areas affected by floods, or donating online[69] or to local churches in earthquake prone regions of the country. Everyday humanitarianism as a do-gooding response to crisis can be proximate for one's neighbours or distant for suffering others. Tanzanians of all social classes are involved in helping when crisis strikes yet these actions remain unacknowledged and unaccounted for. In what follows, we discuss observations from preliminary field research and four areas of conceptual messiness as we iterate back and forth between concept development and empirical dialogue.

The first area of conceptual messiness is the distinction between formal and informal helping and humanitarian neutrality.[70] Our team has found that it is difficult to know the difference between formal and informal help. In the field, people discuss giving support in times of crisis, but that most support comes from close community members and only a little comes from a distance. Thus, we have found everyday humanitarianism efforts are limited by space and timing: people help those in their own neighbourhood immediately in times of crisis or disaster such as floods. Community members explained this practice as 'traditional helping' each other in times of need. The givers are usually the closest people to the victims, including family and close neighbours. They do not necessarily help all of their neighbours, but help their friends in the neighbourhood. It is those in the same crisis situation who provide help to those with worse suffering than theirs. This understanding of everyday humanitarianism challenges the principle of neutrality: the notion that humanitarian assistance comes from people who are not related, do not know one another and are distant from each other.

Also, after community members have provided the initial help to victims, the government takes over as the official provider of assistance. By law, it is the government that receives and coordinates all other support from individuals and organisations.[71] Once the government has taken over,

[66]Simon Turner, 'Staying out of place: The being and becoming of Burundians refugees in the camp and the city', *Conflict and Society*, 2:1 (2015), pp. 37–51.

[67]Lisa Ann Richey, Line Engbo Gissel, Opportuna Leo Kweka et al., 'South-South humanitarianism: The case of Covid-organics in Tanzania', *World Development*, 141:105375 (2021).

[68]Craig Calhoun, 'The idea of emergency: Humanitarian action and global (dis)order', in Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi (eds), *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2010).

[69]For instance, Bukoba Earthquake Rebuilding Org, available at: {www.gofundme.com/Bukobaearthquakes}. These online campaigns are common, yet it is unknown how much funding they typically raise.

[70]Between January and February 2021 Herbert Hambati and Consolata Sulley conducted preliminary field research in Kilosa and Ifakara Districts of Morogogo region, Tanzania for the EHTZ project. Two wards from each district and two villages from each ward were selected due to recurring floods. The main data collection methods were key informant interviews, focus group discussions and field observations with regional, district, ward, and village leaders directly involved with disaster management and flood victims.

[71]United Republic of Tanzania, 'Disaster Management Act' No. 7 (2015).

no support goes directly to the victims without having passed through the government's disaster management channel.

The second area of conceptual messiness is that localisation may lead to less formal accountability. The professionalisation of humanitarianism has led to a series of practices that are donor-facing instead of beneficiary facing, and the localisation agenda has not delt with the fundamental problems of power. Our team hypothesises that everyday humanitarianism may be more directed towards beneficiaries, yet it may not necessarily be more accountable. This is drawn from a notable research challenge across categories of giving or places of crisis: it is rare to find any record of local givers and receivers. At the beginning of a crisis, and before government intervention, even local administrative units rarely keep records of who gives and who receives. However, if support comes from the government or formal institutions like the Red Cross then giving is, in theory, recorded and coordinated. One explanation comes from fieldwork in Kilosa and Ifakara Districts, where local people say that giving is something done to help the needy. Therefore, recording the needs of others may be understood as shameful for calling attention to others' weaknesses. Village elders told us that during a crisis what matters is saving lives. So, even though informal giving is rarely coordinated, it is customarily understood to be community members' responsibility to each other in times of crisis. It is this sense of responsibility that translates into accountability, and may sometimes even attract sanctions or retribution against members who do not help.

A third conceptual point of messiness is about how researchers and their study communities define the objects of analysis: 'Tanzanian helpers'. From our preliminary fieldwork, we are beginning to develop an emic perspective on how respondents perceive the givers and receivers of everyday humanitarianism. Recipients are taken to be the victims or the needy, while the givers are thought to be all those people, groups, and organisations concerned with helping people affected by a disaster. Non-victims, including formal disaster coordinators and assistants, however, sometimes perceive the victims' attitude to humanitarian help as a right. Conversely, sometimes victims perceive helpers as profiting from disasters – even pilfering resources and diverting humanitarian assistance for their own use. Additionally, some affected community members report that unaffected communities rarely offer to help their neighbours, and if they do, they are politicians.

It is not easy to define which helpers should be considered as 'Tanzanian'. There are historical disputes over the identities of non-African immigrants, particularly Asian Tanzanians, laden with the history of violence that, while not as severe as in neighbouring Uganda, has still left a legacy of fear and discontent. Elite givers may reside part-time in country, but also elsewhere. Combatting the racism of humanitarianism should not include racialisation of the identities of helpers, so decolonising everyday humanitarianism challenges us with the complexity of power all the way down.

Finally, the messiness of local politics has shaped our thinking on what kinds of politics everyday humanitarianism in Tanzania enables. Humanitarianism has been identified as resulting from a pro-social orientation[72] and thus it encompasses a diverse variety of both emotions and practices. The question of trust becomes important when examining the politics of everyday humanitarianism. The previous Tanzanian regime under the late John Pombe Magufuli positioned itself as acting against a bureaucratic private sector elite to protect the poor, yet the results of this are disputed. We must better understand what it means politically to give support during times of crisis. When a citizen engages in everyday humanitarianism, will it be understood as a signal of being a contributor to social good in crisis times, or as a threat to the ruling party, Chama cha Mapinduzi[73] (CCM), potentially undermining the government's claims to legitimacy? These conceptualising difficulties

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[72]Benjamin J. Newman, Todd K. Hartman, Patrick L. Lown, and Stanley Feldman, 'Easing the heavy hand: Humanitarian concern, empathy, and opinion on immigration', *British Journal of Political Science*, 3:45 (2015), pp. 583–607.

[73]Translates into 'The Revolutionary Party'. Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), Tanzania's ruling party (and its predecessor parties, Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP)), has held power in Tanzania since independence from Britain in 1961. From 1965–92, it ruled during the single party era, and from the country's first multiparty election in 1995, it has ruled through multiparty elections. General elections were held on 28 October 2020, and CCM won the presidency with 84 per cent of the vote although results were contested by the opposition and processes were

link to research ethics issues in that we must take care to protect our informants' confidentiality, including the elite givers, who may not want to be exposed as givers and thus to political scrutiny.

From the fieldwork, we return to the need to pay attention to the following: First to *local politics*. These are rarely discussed in academic fora because the scholars who write in the international arena are often not closely tuned in to local politics in the Global South. We have found local politics to be highly influential in understanding relationships of giving and receiving help in crisis. Scholars in the Global South must be heard as they articulate these political realities. Second, we must include attention to *gender politics*. In Tanzania, informants explained that who is a giving agent is gendered. Women are typically considered to be receivers of gifts, yet they are also active givers in times of crisis, and often through organisations like mosques or churches that are considered 'too sectarian' for constituting mainstream humanitarianism. Finally, we must return to *international politics* with an attention to structural forces of inequality and histories of colonialism, imperialism, and exploitation. Our collaborations are showing how some interventions are perceived as supportive by Tanzanian communities, even when perhaps they are not, such as Covid-organics,[74] while others are read as imperialistic, even when perhaps they are not, such as the Covid vaccine donations.

## Global North-funded research collaboration in the Global South

This article has argued that both the practice of humanitarianism and the study of it needs decolonising in order to produce better International Studies. In this section, we present some propositions for decolonising as a series of practices and struggles undertaken in collaboration.[75] It is no secret that North-South research collaboration has not been a progressive force in rebalancing the imbalances in academic power or practice that privilege Northern scholars over all others. Now, scholars are critically reflecting on how North-South collaborative research projects meant to 'build capacity' typically link well-resourced researchers with local colleagues on the ground to provide them with data. For example, Sarah C. White describes the compulsion to hold 'workshops' where no one was happy over the acknowledged obstacles, including that 'theory, 'global', and comparative analysis were largely led by the Global North, while data, 'local', or national level analysis were generated by the Global South.[76] Hence, decolonising concepts and theories is key to

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called into question (Karuti Kanyinga, 'Tanzanian Election Leaves a Highly Polarised Society with an Uncertain Future', The Conversation (2020), available at: {https://theconversation.com/tanzanian-election-leaves-a-highly-polarised-society-with-an-uncertain-future-149191} accessed 1 November 2020. Critics situate the country's contemporary partisan politics within the 'authoritarian turn' globally and in Africa (see Nic Cheeseman, *A Divided Continent: Regional Report Africa* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018); Dan Paget, 'Again, making Tanzania great: Maguli's restorationist developmental nationalism', *Democratization*, 27:7 (2020), pp. 1240–60.

[74] Richey, Gissel, Kweka et al., 'South-South humanitarianism'.

[75] We agree that both humanitarian and development studies are in need of substantial decolonisation. See Olivia U. Rutazibwa, 'On babies and bathwater: Decolonizing international development studies', in Sara de Jong, Rosalba Icaza, and Olivia U. Rutazibwa (eds), *Decolonization and Feminisms in Global Teaching and Learning* (London, UK: Routledge, 2018), pp. 192–214; Ilan Kapoor, 'Decolonising development studies', in this forum.

[76] These are of course not the only problems, and White also notes: 'obstacles included research calls having too short turn-around times for bids to be constructed collaboratively with Southern partners; limited institutional capacity in the global South to handle finance and provide research infrastructure; a greater emphasis on research in academic cultures and institutions in the global North; "local language" knowledge of researchers in the global South – and the lack of those language skills among researchers in the global 'North' – leading to field research "naturally" being led by Southern partners; academic publication privileging those writing in their mother tongue which favored global North researchers; and punitive visa regimes in the global North producing unequal opportunities for international travel.' Sarah C. White, 'A space for unlearning? A relational perspective on north-south development research', *European Journal of Development Research*, 32:3 (2020), pp. 484–5. See also Lene Møller Madsen and Hanne Kirstine Adriansen, 'Transnational research capacity building: Whose standards count?', *Critical African Studies*, 13:1 (2021), pp. 49–55; Abdirahman Edle Ali, Alphonce Mollo, Eva Dzegblor et al., 'Decolonising Academic Collaboration: South-North Perspectives', DIIS Policy Brief (2022), available at: {https://www.diis.dk/en/research/decolonising-academic-collaboration} accessed 26 June 2022.

changing the relationships between producers of knowledge in and on the Global South, but the process of doing so is messy.

Our discussion of decolonisation rests in the explication of actually existing research practices.[77] These are not meant to be read as 'best practices' nor as an expose or apology for what could have been done better. Instead, these practices are our attempts to document and analyse our ongoing struggle with decolonising the concepts we use in our work. The authors are political science colleagues employed in Danish and Tanzanian universities in different career stages and part of the Everyday Humanitarianism in Tanzania (EveryHumanTZ)[78] five-year research project. We are 17 European and Tanzanian colleagues and our publication output is purposively co-produced. Covid delays will predictably extend the timeframe in which we can conduct five years of work. Covid affected our work first as colleagues in the North could not collect fieldwork data while on lockdown in Europe and were forced to work from home. Then, colleagues in the South self-managed the Third Wave of Covid in the summer of 2021 at a time when the Tanzanian leadership recognised for the first time that the pandemic was a public health threat in Tanzania. Accepting project delays is part of decolonising research. Some projects moved ahead with data collection by South researchers who were not formally prohibited from working even though they were putting themselves and their informants at risk, but ours did not. Thus, discovering ways of conducting research that does not rely on Southern data collectors and Northern writers/analysts has been necessary in Covid times, not just desirable.[79] It has also assisted the necessary reordering of the typical North-South collaboration model and pushed dialogue between the team members on the process and the products of research.

Aligning the incentive structures from different university research environments is important, but also challenging. Our team has experienced considerable stress, particularly during COVID-19 times, to attend to social and family matters in times that would otherwise have been spent doing research and writing. Data ownership has been a particularly contentious issue, as the team involves collaborations in diverse configurations, and all publications are required to involve scholars from the University of Dar es Salaam as contributing authors. The unequal distribution of resources is a noted problem in North-South research collaborations and this makes choosing to engage in research tasks over better-paid consultancies a difficult choice for our colleagues in less-resourced jobs.[80] Furthermore, other inequalities arising during these collaborations are rarely considered such as the need for linguistic fluency in local languages (Kiswahili and Danish),[81] the importance of experience in the international publication process, the different expectations of supervision for PhD students, the workload incongruity of university employees who can be asked to complete multiple additional tasks for teaching and administration, on top of their time committed to conduct, analyse, publish, and disseminate research.

For example, senior scholars across the project have more flexibility with publication outlets for the work they conduct while PhD students, untenured faculty and faculty striving for promotion do not. The debates around decolonising the publishing process are not easily solved by good intentions or correct ideologies. One example of the messy practice of trying to produce publications that can fit multiple goals comes from our first collaborative article. Seven of our team members, three from Tanzania and four from Denmark, worked together to produce an article published in

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[77]We are colleagues in a research project funded by Danida, through The Consultative Research Committee on Development Research (FFU) and Danish Fellowship Centre.

[78]'Everyday Humanitarianism', a joint research project between Denmark and Tanzania (2019–24), available at: {https://www.everydayhumanitarianismintanzania.org/} accessed 25 June 2022.

[79]For details on the ethical dilemmas of COVID-19 research in this project, see Richey, Gissel, Kweka et al., 'South-South humanitarianism'.

[80]Tiina Kontinen and Ajali M. Nguyahambi, 'Disrupting habits of North-South research collaboration: Learning in co-authoring', *The European Journal of Development Research*, 32:3 (2020), pp. 529–43.

[81]See Chambi Chachage discussing the need to disseminate research findings in both English and Kiswahili and also in video or podcast forms as well as written text, available at: {http://www.udadisi.org/2016/04/udadisi-on-decolonizing-academy.html?view=timeslide} accessed 23 September 2021.

a top-ranked international peer-reviewed journal with project-supported open access. The team decided to translate the article into Kiswahili to allow for the engagement of a wider audience, particularly of policymakers in Tanzania. Concerns were raised over the political consequences of translating and distributing the paper into Kiswahili, as everyone agrees that it was 'safer' to publish only in English. To minimise concerns of potential mistranslation, it was agreed that a professional translator who was familiar with academic discourse would be employed and then the four Kiswahili-speaking authors would quality check the work again. Specific University of Dar es Salaam journals were suggested, but then team members decided that it would not likely increase the audience as international journals are more widely read by Tanzanian academics than local ones. Thus, the intended audience of Kiswahili speakers would be primarily non-academics and they were unlikely to engage with a paper of over 11,000 words and many footnotes. The exact precision of the argumentation and documentation of data sources in the notes produces an argument based strictly on claims justified by data. Caught between the Scylla of a short, sharp piece in Kiswahili to engage policymakers and the Charybdis of sufficient data, detail, and explanation to avoid political misinterpretation, the article remains only in English in a journal for experts, and we continue to struggle with how to adapt as a team of scholars with unequal risk.

As a counterpoint to the many acknowledged obstacles in the way of decolonising North-South research relationships, the power of long-term personal and institutional relationships may be the way that individuals, institutions, and disciplines can work towards incremental changes in practices and values that promote decolonisation.[82] We underscore the importance of time in these collaborations. It takes time to understand what kinds of constraints and challenges other researchers are facing at both institutional and individual levels. The messy practice of decolonising knowledge production involves transparency, debate, and dialogue about how research is produced, by whom, and for whom. As we attempt to decolonise the concept of humanitarianism through the practice of researching everyday humanitarianism, we also attempt to decolonise our own research practices. Both of these processes are ongoing.

Previous scholarship has articulated the need to decolonise the process of knowledge production, and as Lisa Tilley eloquently argues, 'avoiding these extractive forms of empiricism first requires consideration of how research is initially framed and enacted'.[83] In this section, we conclude on the importance of remaking theories and concepts from a South-based perspective as a practice-centred process of decolonising in international studies. Sometimes addressing what people are experiencing in the Global South – both researchers and research participants – is more important than simply pushing ahead with outputs. The mundane problems, as well as the crises, may not be the same or experienced in the same way in the Global South and North, and knowledge production must acknowledge, respect, and work with these differences.

## Conclusions

In our introduction, we explained that from where we stand as collaborators, there are four elements of decolonising a discipline. First, we must rethink and redefine concepts that have colonial characteristics. In this article, we have argued that humanitarianism is a colonial way of understanding transnational helping in response to crisis that centres on unequal binaries of Northern helping and Southern suffering. We have shown how using the concept 'everyday humanitarianism' allows us to stretch conceptual work for understanding helping to refocus on Southern helpers as agents in creating meaningful responses to acute and protracted crises. Second, we argued that we must take a critical understanding of the inequality of academic power that comes with research, productivity, and publication. Our article has illustrated some of the actual messiness of these inequalities and in who is expected to theorise for whom and on the basis of which methodology. Third, we argued that collaborative research between Northern and Southern-based

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[82]White, 'A space for unlearning?'; Benton, 'Ebola at a distance'.
[83]Tilley, 'Resisting piratic method by doing research', p. 37.

scholars was one way to grapple with decolonisation in practice. If these collaborations can be colonising, reproducing inequalities through 'piratic methods',[84] then they can also be done differently. Thus, our article's value is claimed not only in its product, but in its process. Finally, we argued that the actual focus of our theory building, from detached knowledge to inductive theory-building grounded in empirical cases from the Global South could work towards decolonising. Our article has charted the early findings from our empirical work and has begun to reflect on how these challenge our conceptualisations of what humanitarianism, everyday or anywhere, is to those who do it.

In this article, we have documented the ongoing messy practice involved in decolonising the concept of humanitarianism through close collaboration between scholars committed to understanding it from the ground up, using everyday humanitarianism as a concept in progress. The messiness comes from the structural, material factors that divide knowledge workers who are employed in well-resourced settings from those who, despite being full-time university employees, are also engaged in precarious labour. They also come from the ideological and conceptual biases that pervade international studies in which theories are still imagined as they have traditionally been produced, coming from the Global North with data from the Global South. Our answer to this is not to abandon empirical work in the Global South, but to try, even if imperfectly, to produce it in practical, potentially messy, and more decolonised ways. The goal of decolonising a concept is to make it a better concept. This article documents ongoing processes, not quick fix decolonisation. In it are ways of struggling, together, with theories and practices to redress fundamental power imbalances in humanitarianism and in its scholarship.

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[84]Tilley, 'Resisting piratic method by doing research otherwise'.