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A GLOBAL SHELTER IMAGINARY HUMANITARIAN INTERNMENT AND THE RATIONALIZATION OF RIGHTLESS RELIEF



The Global Shelter Imaginary concerns the legitimation horizons of the contemporary humanitarian order. By reviewing the public career of a partnership between IKEA and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to sponsor the production of a universally-replicable camp dwelling called the 'Better Shelter,' this work examines how the same order has come to rely on architecture as the plenipotentiary for the same protections it is abandoning. More specifically, the Global Shelter Imaginary situates the successful public rationalization of the same Better Shelter within a broader failure of "humanitarian reason" (Fassin 2012), as stakeholders in humanitarian governance subordinate the political condition of rightlessness to the technocratic image of relief. The transformations just described actually cast a new light on the history of the refugee camp and of humanitarian internment. Whereas studies of camp humanitarianism typically foreground its origins in the morphologies of colonial internment (Hyslop 2011, McConnachie 2016, Meiches 2015), a history of the legitimation of such practices presents a different trajectory. Notions of a 'better' shelter actually emerged in the metropolitan West during WWI, in a context where members of national and imperial communities, like citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were presented with the prospect of model emergency housing at the cost of internment. Tracing its way through the mid-century career of Fred Cuny and other advocates of 'Shelter in Displacement', the history of the model camp is one in which the substitution of shelter for protection was rendered so 'normal,' irreducible, and necessary that it ceased to be questioned as anything but the triumph of Cosmopolitan Right.

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Andrew Herscher endeavors to bring the study of architecture and cities to bear on struggles for rights, justice, and democracy across a range of global sites. In his scholarship he explores the architecture of political violence, migration and displacement, and self-determination and resistance. His books include *Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict* (Stanford University Press, 2010), *The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit* (University of Michigan Press, 2012), *Displacements: Architecture and Refugee* (Sternberg Press, 2017), and *Spatial Violence* (Routledge, 2016) co-edited with Anooradha Iyer Siddqi. He has also co-founded a series of militant urban research collaboratives including the We the People of Detroit Community Research Collective, Detroit Resists, and the Settler Colonial City Project. He is currently Associate Professor at the University of Michigan in Architecture, Art History, and Slavic Languages and Literatures, and he also co-directs the interdisciplinary faculty/graduate seminar "Decolonizing Pedagogies."