

The Chaos of Humanitarian Aid: Adhocracy in the Republic of Georgia

Humanitarianism presents itself as an altruistic enterprise. The growth of humanitarian agencies in the last fifty years, both intragovernmental and nongovernmental, has advanced an agenda for improving the world to protect human rights and human dignity in the aftermath of conflict or disaster.¹ As international agencies penetrate, override, or work in concert with nation-states, they increasingly seek not only to preserve human life by providing food, medical care, and short-term shelter but to help victims reestablish themselves socially and economically with everything from psychosocial assistance and peace-building seminars to microcredit and business development courses. Humanitarianism thus presents itself as an apolitical regime of care, one concerned with not only keeping people from dying but making them live.

Recently, humanitarianism has been portrayed as not altruistic but nefarious. Critics such as Barnett and Calhoun argue that aid is not a charitable gift but the continuation of politics by other means.² Fassin and Pandolfi, for example, argue that the pretext of protecting individual human rights allows first-world states to override the principle of national sovereignty which undergirded the international system from World War II until the end of the Cold War and to involve themselves in the politics of third-world states.³ Here is humanitarianism as what Agier calls “the left hand of empire,” the use of NGOs and intragovernmental agencies as what Colin Powell famously called “force multipliers” for neo-imperialist military action.⁴ Even as humanitarians seek to preserve victims’ lives, humanitarian aid supposedly reduces so-called beneficiaries to “bare life,” stripping them of their individuality, their social statuses, and their capacities for political action.⁵ Humanitarianism is thus presented as a regime of violence as well as care, seeking not just to keep people from dying but to make them live in particular ways as dominated political subjects.⁶

Michel Agier presents this argument in its strongest form when he calls humanitarianism “totalitarianism.”⁷ Alleging that humanitarianism is “in secret solidarity with the police order,” Agier calls it a “powerful and enduring apparatus” that embodies the Western world’s “desire to control” the Third World.⁸ He writes, “In this moment of lurching toward the limit of power over life, the humanitarian world becomes a totalitarianism, which has the power of life (to make live or survive) and the power of death (to let die) over the individual it considers the absolute victim.”⁹ It seems ironic that humanitarianism, as a paradigm of post-Cold War politics, should be couched in the same terms as the critique of Communism, one of the central paradigms of the Cold War. (Indeed, it is not just the phraseology of totalitarianism that underlies the critique of both Cold War and post-Cold War politics; the two depend on the same

text, Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.)¹⁰ Yet if there is one thing that the anthropology of Cold War Eastern Europe has shown clearly, it is that totalitarian Communist regimes were far less total than their Western critics ever realized. In taking Communist officials at their word about their practices of rule, rather than paying attention to the problems of everyday life caused by how officials really did exercise power, Western analysts grossly overestimated Soviet regimes' ability to control all of social life and thereby completely missed the forces that undermined supposedly "totalitarian" state socialist power. Whatever the impulses of the Communist system were, totalitarianism was not total. It was the interrelationship between attempts at repression and domination and the way that people responded to lapses of power in everyday life that formed the dynamics of the system and, eventually, undermined it.¹¹

In this essay, I would like to suggest that like Cold War-era Communist regimes, new regimes based on humanitarianism are much more limited in their reach than their ambitions might suggest. Incapable of doing all the good they claim to do, they are also not as capable of establishing sovereignty as the term "totalitarian" might suggest. By making the same error that Western analysts of Communism did—that is, dramatically overstating the degree to which bureaucratic practices can create order—critics of humanitarianism fail to fully understand the ways displaced people are, in fact, dominated and so underestimate their scope of action within humanitarian regimes. This leads to a failure to understand not only why beneficiaries remain subject to protracted poverty and violence but also why neo-imperialist humanitarian projects so often fail to have the desired geopolitical effects.

To begin to explore the limits of the humanitarian project, I turn my attention to the case of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Republic of Georgia to show how, from the viewpoint of these newly displaced people, the "international humanitarian order," as Barnett calls it, is far weaker and more disorganized than accusations of totalitarianism imply.¹² Although humanitarian actors claim to govern by applying rationalizing techniques of seeing, counting, and managing, in fact humanitarian aid is a process based as much on guesswork, rules of thumb, and "satisficing" as it is on rational planning. This, I argue, transforms bureaucracy into what I call *adhococracy*, a form of power that creates chaos and vulnerability as much as it creates order. Whatever aspirations humanitarian agents and their funders have to power, adhococracy transforms the humanitarian ideal of social reintegration into a partial project, fosters instability, and sharply limits the reach of domination. If new humanitarian social integration projects are to be faulted, it is not for being the totalitarian "left hand of empire," as Agier asserts, but for creating such disorder that displaced people cannot make reasonable plans for their own futures.

Histories of Violence and Care in the Republic of Georgia

In 2008, during a short but savage war between Russia and Georgia in the breakaway province of South Ossetia, villages in the Greater and Lesser Liakhvi gorges were bombed by Russian aircraft, looted by bandits, burned by Ossetian irregular forces, and in some cases bulldozed. Their residents, who were mostly ethnic Georgians, were ethnically cleansed and forced to flee into Georgia proper, where they joined a popu-

lation of 250,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) from previous conflicts. In the wake of the war, donors pledged over \$350 million in postwar aid to fund activities by six UN agencies, ninety-two NGOs, and five government ministries. Thirty-six settlements for the “new wave” IDPs were built with this foreign donor money, not just to house the IDPs until they could return to South Ossetia but to provide them with a base from which to “socially reintegrate” on a potentially permanent basis inside Georgia proper.¹³ In the new settlements, humanitarian agencies offered the newly displaced immediate necessities such as food, clothing, and household goods but also offered projects such as microlending, small business development training, seeds and tools for agriculture, psychosocial counseling, and job training. Blurring conventional boundaries between emergency relief and development, these humanitarian projects aimed not just to keep the IDPs from dying but to make them live again as citizens, producers, consumers, and family members.

The drive to socially reintegrate the IDPs, rather than let them linger in social isolation in temporary housing indefinitely, came out of a long history of state failure in Georgia. Even before the 2008 war, the state struggled to manage over 250,000 people displaced during the 1991–92 civil wars in the breakaway provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.¹⁴ These “first wave” IDPs flooded public buildings in Georgia in the early 1990s, taking up residence in makeshift conditions that often did not include running water, functioning sanitary facilities, or electrical power.¹⁵ In the capital, Tbilisi, Soviet-era hotels, including the once-luxurious Hotel Iveria on Tbilisi’s main boulevard, became frighteningly dilapidated vertical refugee camps where IDPs struggled to survive.¹⁶ Like other run-down collective centers in some of the city’s most prominent locations, the Iveria was a constant reminder of the Shevardnadze government’s failure to provide security to both the IDPs and the general population in the face of increasing waves of poverty and economic collapse.¹⁷

After the Rose Revolution in 2004, the new government headed by Mikheil Saakashvili was eager to remove the aesthetic and political blight of the IDP collective centers from the urban landscape. In early 2007, the government adopted a neoliberal “National Strategy” to privatize the collective centers and to remove the IDPs as a visible symbol of the state’s failure to render them into the objects of technical policy.¹⁸ As a flagship project, the Iveria Hotel was emptied of IDPs, leased to developers, and transformed into a glass-and-steel Radisson hotel and shopping complex. It was a “monumental embodiment of the political fantasy of [Saakashvili’s] Rose Revolution.”¹⁹ Yet beyond the highly symbolic Iveria, more than 250,000 first-wave IDPs remained in the same squalid limbo as before, recalcitrant in the face of the state’s attempts to manage their suffering bureaucratically.

In 2008, when war broke out again in South Ossetia, the IDP situation took on new urgency.²⁰ With 28,000 new IDPs in addition to the old caseload, demonstrating the state’s ability to care for IDPs became a test of political legitimacy at a moment when Saakashvili’s sovereignty was in doubt due to Georgia’s massive loss of territory during the war. In order to reestablish authority, he had to reassure a restive population that despite his loss of South Ossetia he could continue to lead the country and to provide military, political, and economic security for the population. The fate of the IDPs quickly became a metonym for the reestablishment of sovereignty on a

geopolitical scale, and the new settlements quickly became symbols of the antithesis of the Hotel Iveria. Reconstituting national sovereignty thus required shoring up geopolitical alliances with the United States and Europe, the only actors who could both provide the funding to care for the displaced and, at the same time, forestall a further Russian invasion.

Although Saakashvili had failed to convince Western governments to engage militarily during the South Ossetian war, he engaged them on a massive scale by throwing open Georgia's doors to foreign donor governments, the United Nations, and international NGOs, who provided over \$1 billion in aid in 2008–9. In contrast to what Pandolfi has described for former Yugoslavia, the humanitarian apparatus in Georgia did not violate national sovereignty or override an unwilling government.²¹ To the contrary, humanitarianism in Georgia was intrinsically a state-building project, one that promulgated “capacity building” for the nation-state as a means to deliver aid more effectively, bind Georgia more tightly to the West as a client state, and create a bulwark against Russian expansionism. Whatever the neoimperialist geopolitical ambitions of the Western donor nations, they were consonant with Saakashvili's larger project of penetrating social milieux that had been outside state control since the collapse of the USSR. Like the Communists before him, Saakashvili's goal was to reestablish state control over minute, everyday aspects of social, political, and economic life.²² Controlling the social reintegration of the IDPs was a key element in that project.

Modalities of Humanitarian Governance

“Social reintegration,” as a goal of humanitarian relief, is a new trend in aid. Where once displaced people were held in social limbo in camps waiting for a time when they could return to their countries of origin, UN agencies have increasingly turned to the notion that one durable solution for displaced people is to encourage them to enter the societies and economies of the places in which they now reside.²³ But social reintegration is not left to the ad hoc decisions of individual displaced people. Rather, through a series of aid projects that cover almost every aspect of social life, compassion is supposed to be transformed into a series of rationally planned and well-coordinated projects that will establish a new social order and allow IDPs to reintegrate in desirable ways. In the properly governed spaces of the settlement, IDPs are supposed to become politically docile and economically productive subjects who run their own businesses, farm food for consumption and sale, maintain healthy bodies, and form stable families.

As in many other postconflict situations, the government, international donor government agencies, and international NGOs in Georgia portrayed the vast array of humanitarian projects as apolitical charity. On television, on the Internet, and in the glossy reports of the aid agencies, the building of the settlements and all the projects to reestablish “normal” life that went on within them were seen as gifts of care for which IDPs should be grateful. On one occasion, for example, I traveled to Prezeti settlement, where the minister of health, Sandro Kvitashvili, had arrived with a phalanx of television reporters (many of whom were from the government-controlled stations). As he made a very brief tour of a cottage where a mobile medical team was

visiting and gave a statement for the cameras, I watched reporters rounding up IDPs for interviews and telling them what to say. One reporter put her arm around an elderly woman and hustled her toward the camera while telling her, “Just say you’re really grateful for the minister’s help, and for everything you’ve gotten.”

For all the agencies involved in the UN’s cluster system, the fact that social reintegration projects were managed through a series of bureaucratic systems ranging from cluster system coordination, formalized needs assessment surveys, and international standards for aid to standardized accounting practices and quantitative outcome measures was a point of pride. The bureaucratic regulation of aid allowed the Saakashvili government, which had gained international legitimacy through its efforts to combat corruption, to claim that the aid process was well regulated, orderly, and transparent. As Saakashvili said, “Responsible leadership and transparent governance are needed if you want your aid to be effective and change people’s lives.”²⁴

How were these claims about care and transparency related? Why did effective social reintegration seem, at least in the minds of both the foreign humanitarian agencies and the Georgian government, to require bureaucratic order to create totalizing forms of social order? For critics like Maren or Polman, the application of bureaucratic practices commonly used in both government and industry implies that humanitarians’ declarations of altruistic motives are a sham.²⁵ But bureaucratization is neither a straightforward way to more efficiently create social order, as the humanitarian agencies claim, nor a contradiction of altruism.²⁶ Rather, sentiments of altruism, bureaucratic management, and the construction of spaces like the new Georgian settlements are three distinct modalities of care, each of which locates humanitarian action in a unique space and enables particular forms of action.

In the first instantiation, the *affective modality*, humanitarianism presents itself as an ethical configuration.²⁷ As a moral and emotional reaction to suffering, humanitarianism engages with notions of destruction and salvation that are both locally specific and derived from global discourses of morality and violence rooted in Western norms.²⁸ Despite the emotive pull of these discourses, they are not transformed into action until they are institutionalized in NGOs, UN agencies, and government ministries. This transformation into the *bureaucratic modality* renders suffering into an organizational or logistical problem, one that can be rationalized in a Weberian sense.²⁹ Yet mere bureaucratic rationalization and the creation of new social institutions is not enough to help displaced people. Instead, the products of the bureaucratic modality—its reports and PowerPoint shows, its proposals and spreadsheets, its projects and reports—become aid when they are transformed into a *material modality*. In this mode, humanitarian projects are transformed into new material objects like food, furnishings, and medicines, and most especially into new spaces of habitation, production, and consumption. An IDP settlement is thus the material manifestation of the meanings attached to care and compassion (including political ones), the specific ideologies and forms of sovereignty within which those sentiments were transformed into bureaucratic architectures, and the ways bureaucratic institutions use specific techniques to perceive need, assess risk, and provide assistance.

While the aim of such projects may be to govern all of social life for the displaced in a kind of benevolent totalitarianism, the actual reach of aid projects is determined

by the negotiations, slippages, and deviations from plan that occur in the transformations between affective, bureaucratic, and material modalities.³⁰ Like many other totalizing attempts to improve the human condition, including not only state socialism but also liberal development, humanitarianism's mobile sovereignty often falls short of its stated goals as it attempts to use bureaucratic means to shape the behavior of the target population and constitute security.³¹

Managing Aid: The Cluster System

To manage the massive flood of aid entering the country, the United Nations provided its Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as the lead agency, promising a streamlined bureaucratic method for converting offers of help to the war-affected population into material assistance. By August 11, a mere four days after the outbreak of the war, OCHA had arrived and set up a "cluster coordination" mechanism for organizing the many NGOs and millions of dollars in aid that had begun to flow into the country.³² The cluster coordination system is a recent bureaucratic innovation, put forth by the United Nations in 2005 in the wake of the UN's inadequate response to the Darfur crisis.³³ It is designed, in the vague terms of the UN document describing it, to "ensure sufficient global capacity," "identify predictable leadership," "strengthen accountability," and "improve strategic field-level coordination and prioritization."³⁴

Ticktin calls humanitarianism an ethical configuration that attempts to depoliticize human suffering by rendering it into a moral problem—that is, by rendering a political problem into an affective one.³⁵ In Georgia, it soon became clear that the cluster system sought to render political problems apolitical. But it did so here not by shifting to the ground of values but by transforming compassion into bureaucracy and suffering into a purely technical problem.³⁶ Via the cluster system, OCHA established a division of labor among agencies, appealed to donors for funds, and coordinated the delivery of services to the displaced. The cluster system rendered suffering technical by breaking human needs into nine categories managed at the level of population: shelter, food security, water and sanitation, health, logistics, early recovery, protection, security, and telecommunications. Each of these functional areas was assigned to a UN agency, known as the "cluster lead." The World Health Organization handled health, for example, while the World Food Program managed food supply. While OCHA coordinated the entire aid process, the cluster leads were supposed to gather donor agencies, international NGOs, local NGOs, and government ministries working on that particular issue and coordinate all the "partner agencies" to ensure that most needs would be met, that two NGOs would not provide the same services to the same group of IDPs, and that there were no gaps in the provision of aid. The cluster leads were also supposed to coordinate the funding process by dividing up the labor to be done, coordinating the development of project proposals, and aggregating them into a joint request for funding from donor governments known as the "Flash Appeal." Each project was carefully recorded on a master spreadsheet coordinated by the cluster leads and distributed to all the participants in the cluster.

The aid system thus had a grid- or cell-like structure, one designed to superimpose order on the chaos of agencies offering help, namely, by breaking down the complex

basket of needs of a widely varying group of displaced people into a fungible bundle of biophysiological needs assigned to corresponding bureaucratic structures. Individuals themselves were bureaucratically standardized, stripped of the social ties forged in village communities and the social identities tied to gender, age, residence, and health status. With the exception of children (who became the focus of particular attention from UNICEF), all displaced people were assumed to be identical individuals with identical needs. The same allotments for caloric intake, medical care, sleeping space, and clothing were made for each individual, now the anonymous unit of humanitarian need. As the IDPs streamed through the tent camp in Gori, en route to the kindergartens and other public buildings where they would stay for the first four months, humanitarian agencies passed out cots, woolen blankets imprinted with the UNHCR logo, meals designed to meet basic caloric requirements, and standardized “hygiene kits” with a washcloth, soap, and toothbrush. Through the process of standardizing aid, each IDP was turned into an anonymous, standardized example of humanity, a *homo humanitarius* as generic as the *homo sovieticus* that preceded him.³⁷

At the same time that the refugees were standardized as a population, however, the individual was broken apart bureaucratically. Physical needs for food, shelter, water, and the repair of the body were considered separately and largely without relation to one another. People’s needs as social beings—the need to know where family and friends were and to be near them, the need to worship, be educated, or have meaningful work—were all left aside in the rush to meet basic biological needs.³⁸ IDPs with specific personal, occupational, generational, and place-based identities were thus transformed into a population assumed to have uniform needs rather than a collection of individual sufferers.

Reducing the IDPs to standardized victims had the salutary effect, at least from a bureaucratic perspective, of making it possible to resolve their problems using standardized “kits” of aid. As Redfield points out, humanitarian agencies have long relied on kits, repositories of implements that may be useful in alleviating suffering.³⁹ Like the medical kits carried by doctors, the larger-scale humanitarian kits assembled by humanitarian agencies are prepacked and portable, stockpiled for fast-breaking emergencies. They are highly standardized for various types of disasters: massive displacement, endemic disease, famine. Some of the kits contain material necessities, such as tents, cots, and blankets for a thousand people, an isolation hospital to treat five hundred cholera sufferers, or equipment to build latrines for five thousand displaced people in a temporary camp. But other kits are as replete with concepts and administrative tools as they are with material items: microloan projects, work-for-food programs, domestic violence prevention training, and peace-building seminars often come in prefabricated “kits” of ideas and activities that are as prepackaged as kits for cholera prevention or de-mining. As “immutable mobiles,” these project kits were considered eminently portable, as suitable for one country or disaster as another.⁴⁰

OCHA’s job, then, was to use the standardized modular kits offered by the various humanitarian agencies and funded via the Flash Appeal to assemble a new social edifice. In Georgia, that edifice had to provide long-term security to the IDPs while, at the same time, engaging Western donor governments in ways that facilitated

national security. To do this, the bureaucratic structures of the cluster system had to be transformed into a third modality of care—a *spatial* mode, in which the grid-like structure of the cluster system could be quickly written onto the built environment to create a space where humanitarian kits could be deployed.

In early October 2008, just a few weeks after the bulk of the IDPs had moved into kindergartens and other public buildings in urban areas, the Municipal Development Fund of the government of Georgia broke ground on thirty-five IDP settlements.⁴¹ Working twenty-two hours a day, construction companies hastily tossed up small cinderblock cottages or renovated government buildings into tiny standardized apartments. These new settlements were the material embodiment of the clusters' spreadsheets. Although the cottages and most of the apartments envisioned people in nuclear family groups rather than as individuals, they assumed a homogeneous set of needs for each nuclear family and disregarded the ties of extended family that predominate in Georgian social relations. In the cottage settlements, each family was assigned an identical amount of space, no matter whether it comprised three people or six, and each cottage was furnished identically.⁴² ("Why did they only give us four stools," asked the mother of a family in Tsmindatsqali, "when they know full well that there are five people living here?") Kin groups were often broken apart and housed in distant settlements. With the sole exception of Tserovani settlement, which had a preexisting main street from when it was a Soviet kolkhoz, no room was set aside in the settlements for schools, churches, or even bathhouses—a serious lacuna, given the lack of indoor plumbing in many settlements. Clearly, the object was to get bodies under roofs, bodies that were considered as little more than individualized shelter-needing biological units.

The neat grids of the settlements seem to display the same "state simplifications" and "high modernist ideology" that Scott so brilliantly described.⁴³ The bureaucratic reduction of people into bundles of biophysical needs, the architectural reduction of spaces for social interaction, and the transfer of rationality from the white cells of the spreadsheet into the white cells of the settlement's grid all seemed to evidence an attempt to control people by making them visible and legible. This was a clear contrast to the solution proffered for the "old" IDPs, who were squirreled away haphazardly in public buildings. Yet "bare life" did not sum up the forms of existence in the settlements. Along with the provision of infrastructure, medical care, and basic necessities like food and clothing, many of the "kits" humanitarian NGOs offered were conceptual rather than material and aimed at social reintegration rather than the mere continuation of physical life. The International Organization for Migration, for example, brought out standardized psychosocial aid programs aimed at providing emotional support to people who experienced violence. CARE International not only brought firewood but also an array of economic development programs, including business training, vocational education, and microlending. Heifer International funded the distribution of livestock via the French agency Première Urgence. In each of the thirty-six settlements—but particularly Tserovani, which was closest to Tbilisi and which thus became a demonstration site to be shown off to both the public and visiting dignitaries—projects were launched to transform the built environment in ways that would interpellate the IDPs as active, productive subjects. In Tserovani,

soon after a police station was built as a visible marker of state sovereignty and discipline, other buildings indexing a more complex form of engagement with the state and with the local economy were erected. A glossy new school was built to educate IDP children. Next door, a large municipal building was built to house the governments-in-exile of the displaced villages. Across the street, a line of small shops was built to replace the metal grocery kiosks and bazaars that served the destroyed villages. In the center of the new retail row, a sign announcing the imminent construction of an Internet cafe signaled that the IDPs would soon be connected to the global flow of information. As the months went on, a few small factories began to encircle the perimeter: a commercial bakery, a paper mill, a commercial chicken farm. All of them were built with hundreds of thousands of dollars in subsidies to private entrepreneurs from USAID and other donors.

The Georgian government was adamant that these new dwelling-places were “settlements,” or *dasaxleobebi*, rather than “camps,” or *banakebi*. Settlements were meant to be something radically different from refugee camps, which were seen as a technology for excluding people from the polity, warehousing them, or constituting them as surplus humans.⁴⁴ Tserovani was not meant to reduce the IDPs to bare life or to act as a holding tank for an unwanted and useless population. Rather, it was expressly designed to *reincorporate* the IDPs, to reconstitute them as productive social beings and to reengage them as citizens of the nation by enmeshing them in webs of circulating ideas, products, people, and money. Clearly, the form of sovereignty operating in the settlement was not premised on a state of exception but on a more productive form of biopolitics that used neoliberal technologies of development and aid to make the IDPs live but then turned their existence into a debt owed to the state, one that could be gratefully acknowledged but never repaid.⁴⁵ Humanitarian aid thus created not just a public symbol of the West’s willingness to guarantee Saakashvili’s sovereignty vis-à-vis Russia but a form of citizenship in which people were made simultaneously responsible for themselves and eternally dependent on the state. In theory, at least, the humanitarian penetration of everyday life would enable a new form of statist totalitarian control.

Adhocracy and the Production of Chaos

From the standpoint of donor governments and the international NGOs, social reintegration seemed like a well-organized and logical project. The linkage between humanitarianism and state-building seemed like a straightforward way to constitute social order and security. But behind the orderly facades of the spreadsheets, meticulously designed cluster system, and identical cottages, the IDPs did not experience a sense of security or well-being. From the settlement, the NGOs and the state could only be partially seen, and the social order they attempted to construct presented itself as something fragmentary, confusing, and arbitrary. Many of the IDPs lived with a chronic sense of fear, an all-encompassing sense that the future was unknown and that they were constantly at risk of further violence or disaster. As Vano Grigoladze, an IDP from the village of Tamarasheni, told me:

The Russians have taken my future. They’ve taken my path. Before I had walnut trees, a beautiful house. . . . Now, I don’t know what will happen. There’s nothing

here, there's no path forward. We're afraid. For fifteen years (in South Ossetia), they were shooting at us. We lived in fear. Now I'm afraid that if the Russians come back, they're going to take all of Georgia. That is the Russians' way: to pretend they are your friends, then turn around and shoot you. So who is going to help me? I am afraid of dying, and nobody should die too early. I don't know when I was born and I don't know when I'll die. In between, it's been nothing but war.⁴⁶

In fourteen months of research in the settlements, I heard a variation of this speech over and over, from men and women, IDPs from every village, and people of all ages. In this lament, regional, national, and local levels of vulnerability were all mixed up together: the Russians had taken away all forms of security, and neither Saakashvili nor the international NGOs had been able to restore social order.

The litany points to the abyss between the planners' visions for social reintegration and the beneficiaries' experience of it. Despite the intense bureaucratization of aid, the acutely stylized forms of planning, and the carefully thought-out contents of each humanitarian project, beneficiaries did not see reintegration projects as productive of a nurturing social order that facilitated their resumption of their familiar everyday lives. Nor did they see attempts at social reintegration as an oppressive totalitarian order. Instead, the new humanitarian order in the settlements came to be seen as an extension of the chaos of war—a kind of permanent disruption that rendered life unpredictable, left people at risk of violence and poverty, and prevented people from making their own plans for new lives outside South Ossetia.

Why did the plan for social reintegration organized within the cluster system produce a sense of chaos for its beneficiaries rather than a sense of order? If one looks at the copious spreadsheets, notes, maps, and grids archived at the UN's ReliefNet site, a computer archive open to all the participants in the cluster system, the social integration project for the new IDPs seems well planned. Via its designated "Response Coordinator," the minister of health and labor, the government of Georgia claimed that it could tell the international agencies what the IDPs needed and how it should be delivered. For their part, the international agencies gave the appearance of having the means to fulfill the government's plan quickly and efficiently. However, it soon became clear that the bureaucratic mode of humanitarian action was not simply characterized by epistemologies of planning and order but was fundamentally reliant on other forms of knowing, including guesswork and improvisation. Context came to be all important: while individual humanitarian agencies see themselves as "a mobile strike force" that can deploy kits without regard to the specifics of any particular emergency, the kits' poor articulation with the vague overarching plan for meeting the IDPs' needs and the foreign aid workers' ignorance of the particular needs of a post-Soviet population meant that projects were often transitory, confusing, and useless.⁴⁷ This epistemological fuzziness cast doubt on claims to create security through political acts of spatial composition and problematized the idea that humanitarian activity could turn political vulnerability into a technical problem.

The first hints of just how disorderly the aid process would be came in the opening week of the war. In the first place, despite the fact that the government of Georgia's

response coordinator was supposed to work with OCHA and the cluster leads to develop the Flash Appeal or the master plan for the aid effort that could be sent to donors to request funding, there was never any central planning agency or coherent plan for aid to the displaced. On the government side, rather than a single spokesman for the government, there was a parliamentary committee, a group in the Chancellery, a group at the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, a group formed by the Tbilisi municipal government, and a special group formed by the prime minister, all claiming to represent the government in the cluster-planning process. None of these agencies, though, had the capability to make a master plan that would organize the work of all the agencies offering aid. As Julia Kharashvili, who coordinated relief efforts at the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MRA), said, “The MRA had no opportunity to make a plan. There were only three people here who even spoke English. My telephone was ringing nonstop. We would work until two or three in the morning, go home to sleep three hours, and come back. I hardly had time to shower or dress, I’d get the neck of my shirt on and one sleeve and the phone would ring again.” Likewise, on the side of the international aid agencies, there was a noisy plethora of voices and negotiating partners. While OCHA claimed to be coordinating the international response, many of the ninety-two NGOs involved in the cluster system were devising plans of their own and negotiating independently with the government; still other aid agencies that were not participating in the cluster system were carrying out activities on the ground without informing either OCHA or the government of these. Thus, from the earliest days after the war broke out, there was an enormous pluralization of regulatory activity and regulatory authority that undermined the supposed rationality of the system.

Indeed, for the IDPs themselves, the welter of ministries, local government agencies, funders, international NGOs, and intragovernmentals was totally incomprehensible. Seen only fleetingly as they passed through the settlements on sightseeing visits with dignitaries or came for a few hours to hold a meeting or distribute aid packages, the humanitarian agencies seemed to come and go without any explanation. For the first few months, the IDPs lumped all of them together as *mtavroba*, “the government.” (I would ask, “Who brought you this food package,” for example, while pointing at a World Food Program bundle containing bags of beans with the USAID logo, and IDPs would answer “*mtavroba*.”) Later, they began to make the distinction between *mtavroba* and *arasamtavrobis organizatsiebi*, or nongovernmental organizations. But any finer distinctions remained beyond the IDPs’ ken: even as the NGOs plastered cottages and food bags and telephone poles with their logos, the IDPs never sorted CARE from World Vision or from Save the Children.

The fact that the humanitarian agencies brought projects in the form of prefabricated kits pushed the system further into chaos rather than adding order or rationality. According to David Kacharava, who led the health cluster on behalf of the World Health Organization, the process of developing the Flash Appeal was done almost entirely on the fly, as aid agencies pulled whatever kits they had on hand off the shelf without much concrete knowledge of what these particular IDPs, in this particular postconflict situation, actually needed:

The Ministry of Health did not even participate. Some of the partners (international NGOs and donor agencies) were calling us from the airport the night before the Flash Appeal was due, saying “we want in.” They didn’t know Georgia, didn’t know the situation, didn’t know what anybody else was doing. They just cut and pasted some old projects together. They literally just took the words “Indonesia” or “Congo” out, and put in “Georgia.” Some of the projects were total bullshit.

NGOs and donors were faced with a situation in which they had to rapidly predict the actions of hundreds of other actors without any central plan to reference. To decide what projects to offer or fund, they had to make fast guesses about what IDPs needed, what the other NGOs were doing, and what the government would approve. This required epistemological tools that went beyond such acknowledged tools for bureaucratic rationalization as standardization and gridding. Instead, it required a set of covert epistemological tools that included *imagining*, *rules of thumb*, and *satisficing*. These tools transformed what first appeared to be a well-planned and orderly system into something with a markedly ad hoc character.

One example of an alternate epistemology was *imagining*. In selecting which “kits” to bring, workers often had to imagine what the situation on the ground might be like—offering to bring water to counteract an imagined dearth, or bringing in medicines to counteract the endemic disease they believed would emerge. In the absence of anything more than cursory “rapid assessments,” aid agencies had to imagine what the IDPs needed or would like to eat, wear, and sleep on. Although some haphazard information was provided in the cluster coordination meetings, aid agencies often had to guess what the other aid agencies were doing, estimate what resources other actors had and where they were operating, and even where the IDPs would go next. The result was aid flowing in that was unneeded or inappropriate, while real needs were often not met. For the official from the Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation, the problem was that each NGO imagined need differently:

One hundred organizations a day came to us to say, “I want to do something to help. We’ll bring tents.” And then the next people would say, “We’ll bring tents, but in a different color.” Some organizations would say, “We’ll bring water.” And I would tell them that we had water in Gori, there was no need for anybody to bring it in. But they would say, “It’s an emergency! You always need water in an emergency!” and they’d bring it anyway. A lot of times the aid they had to give didn’t match what we needed. So they might bring a hundred tents, when we already had enough tents but needed eighty mattresses. This kind of aid has a high dollar value, but that doesn’t always meet people’s real needs. Everybody brought what they could, but it often duplicated what the government already had in its emergency stocks. And then I was left trying to account for what had happened to all this money, to all these things that we didn’t want or need. UNHCR sent used clothes, for example, but they were often secondhand clothes in really big sizes, bigger than people here wear. The Japanese sent clothes and shoes, too, but in really tiny sizes that we couldn’t do anything with except give to children. What we couldn’t use, we just had to throw away.

Even months later, the mismatch between the material aid delivered in response to imagined needs and the IDPs' real needs was evident. In the cottage of Vakhtang Baratashvili, an elderly man, a bed was stacked with used toys: dolls with tangled hair, ratty stuffed animals, and some grubby things made of injection-molded plastic. I was startled and asked if he had children living there. "No," he said, "They just gave those to me." He was given shoes as well, which he kept neatly stacked in one of the bedrooms. None of them fit, he complained, even though he'd told the aid workers his size. Bending down, he poked his finger through the hole in the shoe he was wearing. "It would be nice to have a pair that wasn't falling apart, or at least an awl and a needle and thread, so I could repair these."

Inappropriate training and technical assistance revealed the extent to which humanitarian kits operated on the basis of *rules of thumb*, knowledge gained in one specific context that had been generalized to apply to all crisis situations regardless of their nature or location. The idea that water was needed in every emergency showed how epistemologically powerful these rules of thumb were, as did the "bullshit" projects developed for Indonesia or Congo that were assumed to be equally necessary in Georgia. In many instances, the application of rules of thumb in ways that ignored local contexts led to spectacular misallocations of aid dollars. For example, the Health Cluster identified low rates of breastfeeding as a key problem, made "promoting evidence-based feeding practices" one of three goals of the cluster under the Flash Appeal, and requested \$680,000 in funding for infant feeding support programs to be carried out by seventeen mobile teams.⁴⁸ Infant feeding programs were developed in Africa, where bottle-feeding is widely promoted but can be dangerous because of erratic supplies of formula and contaminated water. Georgia, though, is a post-Soviet country, one that experienced industrialization and urban development. There were even fewer infants in the IDP population than in the already disproportionately aging Georgian population as a whole, because young people had been migrating out of Georgian villages in South Ossetia to look for work. Breastfeeding in Georgia was widely accepted, formula remained easily available throughout the crisis, and there was high-quality running water in all the places IDPs were placed. Yet breastfeeding support was deemed urgent, because humanitarian agencies' experiences in other locales suggested it should be urgent. In the race to develop projects and get them funded through the Flash Appeal, a model based on a totally different context was applied to Georgia, and hundreds of thousands of dollars in aid money were devoted to preventing a problem that never existed. Meanwhile, there were other problems for which no rules of thumb had been developed, such as diabetes in elderly IDPs living on high-glycemic-index bread, macaroni, and sugar delivered to them by the World Food Program. These went unseen and largely unaddressed.

The same problem reappeared in projects to improve the IDPs' mental health. Many of the NGOs competed to create photogenic "child-friendly spaces," brightly painted rooms where children could play, draw, and paint. Six NGOs quickly devised psychotherapeutic programming for children, opportunities for the children to reenact their traumatic experiences or to depict them in artwork. Yet, as Kharashvili of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation pointed out, psychosocial aid to children was not the most pressing need:

So many people wanted to do psychosocial assistance for children, even more than wanted to do humanitarian aid. But really, the most traumatized people were often the elderly. They stayed behind to guard their houses, and they were often taken hostage, beaten, thrown in to prisons, or forced to bury the corpses of the dead. But nobody wanted to help them. Our appeals for that kind of help were like a voice shouting in the desert. We kept rejecting international organizations' plans, because there are local organizations here that are well-trained and well-qualified. The internationals would have to work through translators, and really, what kind of psychological help can you give that way? We begged the international agencies not to send their own people, but to fund the trained Georgian therapists we had here.

This kind of misplaced funding was well-intentioned, to be sure, but showed a significant disjuncture between the help on offer and the actual needs of the population, because it was almost always the result of using rules of thumb developed in another part of the world as heuristics for aid planning in Georgia.

Above all, humanitarian epistemologies were based on *satisficing*. Satisficing refers to the process of making decisions that are “good enough” rather than optimal.⁴⁹ Under the pressure of time, and with poor information to go on, aid workers often designed projects that seemed to help “well enough,” rather than making the largest possible contribution. Bringing water when it wasn't needed was an example of this kind of satisficing—it looked good to donors and fulfilled the aid agency's mandate for emergency assistance, and so was “good enough,” even though the IDPs did not actually need water. Satisficing was also driven by ideological concerns external to the situation in Georgia. When donors had pet projects or concepts (around ideas of gender, age, and other forms of vulnerability, for example), those clearly spurred aid agencies to cobble together “good-enough” projects that provided some small help to the target population, even if the money might have been spent to make a bigger difference to a more vulnerable group. As a UNHCR official said, “The NGOs have their sexy projects, and they try and squeeze them in.” IDPs thus became not the customers or beneficiaries of humanitarian aid but a part of the means of production for NGOs as they sought to meet the requirements of their clients, the donors.⁵⁰

The largest problem, though, was not that individual projects were poorly designed or inappropriate to the situation. It was that because the project kit was the fundamental unit of action rather than a master plan, the aid system remained patchy and erratic, and thus could not constitute a seamless social order that would produce existential security. OCHA was, at least in theory, supposed to use the cluster system to assemble these modular kits into a coherent plan of action to reestablish social order that could be detailed in the Flash Appeal. However, as a unit of social practice, off-the-shelf humanitarian kits had a markedly idiosyncratic character: although they could be replicated from site to site without regard for local particularities of place, they were not standardized with respect to one another and thus were remarkably difficult to organize, arrange so that they did not overlap, or map neatly onto the spatial coordinates where the IDPs were living. Because OCHA had no power to dictate to donors what they might fund or to NGOs what projects they should carry

out, the Flash Appeal never functioned as any kind of master plan. Rather, it remained a loose concatenation of kit-based projects proposed by NGOs themselves without respect to any planning or coordination mechanism. Chaos was thus not just something created by the war, against which the institutional structures of bureaucratic care had to struggle, but an intrinsic property of a system in which various organizations obtained funding by proposing self-contained projects ad hoc. This was not therapeutic domination, in the sense of a visible sovereign meticulously planning for the welfare of a population. Nor was it totalitarianism, a monstrous but well-organized system that could penetrate the most minute aspects of social life. It was, instead, *ad hoc*cracy, a system that used rough-and-ready ways of knowing to quickly arrive at improvised solutions.

Adhocracies rely on what Tilly called “the invisible elbow,” an imprecise means for muddling along by making reasonable guesses about actions in a complex world, which often leads to mistakes.⁵¹ Tilly, contrasting this mode of governance to the assumed accuracy of market rationality, describes it like this:

For the invisible hand, let’s substitute the invisible elbow. Coming home from the grocery store, arms overflowing with food-filled bags, you wedge yourself against the doorjamb, somehow free a hand to open the kitchen door, enter the house, and then nudge the door shut again with your elbow. Because elbows are not prehensile, and in this situation not visible either, you sometimes slam the door smartly, sometimes swing the door halfway closed, sometimes miss completely on the first pass, sometimes bruise your arm on the wood, sometimes shatter the glass, and sometimes—responding to one of these earlier calamities—spill the groceries all over the floor.⁵²

Tilly’s point is that given constraints on information and the enormous difficulty of predicting what other people are going to do, most social actors are muddling around most of the time, doing the best they can but not very well. In the complicated world of humanitarian intervention, where hundreds of agencies attempt to plan action in the midst of rapidly changing events, agencies routinely make provisional plans and then attempt to alter their behavior quickly as they obtain new information. Far from that of omniscient benevolent sovereigns or omnipotent totalitarian tyrants, their power is sharply limited by the fact that they are mostly bumbling about, acting on the basis of half-knowledge, inappropriate analogies, and very loose rules of thumb.

While government officials and foreign aid workers alike are willing to acknowledge just how much bungling and improvisation there is, they attribute it to different causes. One UN official saw the lack of rational planning and the need for on-the-fly responses not as a flaw in the cluster system but as a problem of Georgian character:

The clusters are very ad hoc. Even where we have structures, it stays ad hoc. Part of this is the Georgian mentality—they are ad hoc-ish. I’m afraid that even good structures here will reduce but not overcome this ad hoc-ishness. It’s Georgia, and you have to play it their way. If there is an acute situation, you have to put away your structures, and just help. That way, you gain the ministry’s trust, so they listen to you the next time. It’s extremely personalized.

But adhocism was not a distortion of the cluster system introduced by irrational and inappropriately personalistic locals. Rather, it was equally a problem endemic to the cluster system that could be seen in the missteps and slippages of aid planning. These were not evidence of a deficit of modernist bureaucratic rationality but rather signals indicating the co-presence of other forms of knowledge that were important alternative bridges between the affective and material modes of care.

Materializing Adhocism

The ad hoc character of the aid process not only permeates humanitarianism's bureaucratic mode but profoundly shapes its spatial mode as well. Rather than creating the secure, productive environments that might reintegrate displaced people as citizens, adhocism creates a material environment that rapidly decays, leaving displaced people with the burden of repairing the mistakes made by epistemologies of guessing, imagination, and analogy. These chaotic, crumbling environments—slums in the making—leave displaced people demoralized, more vulnerable to violence and disaster, and more likely to be poor. IDPs are thus reduced to a struggle for survival, not as a result of calculated action but by barriers to calculation inherent in the system.

In Georgia, although the settlements gave the appearance of being carefully planned, they were in fact rapidly cobbled together. According to officials at UNHCR, the settlements were constructed completely outside the cluster system, unbeknownst to any of the people working within it to plan for resettlement. On its own, the government's Municipal Development Fund quickly drafted plans for the new settlements and hired construction firms to begin work. The government only notified UNHCR, which believed the IDPs would stay in the kindergartens for the winter, after ground was broken at Tserovani. According to another UNHCR official, this haste was for reasons of statecraft: it was to show donors that the Georgian government could "do it better and faster" and thus to elicit cash donations to build the Georgian government rather than allowing international agencies to manage resettlement. Haste, he said, was an integral part of the chaotic and improvisational character of Georgian adhocism: "They say, 'Once we settle the refugees, then we'll take the next step. We'll do schools for all the villages later.' They are always saying, 'We'll cross that bridge when we come to it.' But by that time, half of the beneficiaries are already in the river!" In the end, the UNHCR official argued, the settlements were built without an extensive planning process, as the result of snap decisions made by government officials: "Resettlement is like a water system: if you build it right, then if there's a leak, you can replace the bad pipe and the system will work again. But if you don't design the system right from the beginning, when it's broken, you can't fix it. I'm worried that the government hasn't planned, and that things are going to break down in ways that can't be fixed."

Things did indeed begin to break down quickly. Within weeks of the cottages' being built, the adhocist institutional mode of care began to manifest itself spatially, and chaos began to inscribe itself on the built environment. In the rush to build thousands of cottages, the construction firms contracted by the Georgian government bought wet materials and often had not given them time to dry before continuing construction. Soon after IDPs moved into their new quarters, the buildings began to

disintegrate. Wooden floorboards laid tightly together shrank, creating gaps where snakes, ants, and grass entered IDPs' homes. Wet plaster on the walls contracted as it dried, leaving the cottages with crumbling walls. The cottages had been designed hastily, with no ventilation for their tiny attics, so breath and steam from cooking pots condensed on the interior lining of the roof and fell back into the houses, leaving large brown water spots and holes in the ceilings.

In the settlements without indoor plumbing, outhouses over pits served as toilets. However, the pits were often dug into clay soil, and waste began to rise in the pits rather than percolating down through the ground. Because the IDPs were expected to provide for their own food by planting the land around each cottage with vegetables, the human waste coming up toward the surface risked contaminating the crops and posed a serious health threat. Because no area had been designed to enable trucks to drive up to the latrines, it was soon impossible to remove the waste without destroying the crops the IDPs labored to grow.

The built environment of the settlements thus reflected not only the statist urge to create discipline by ordering people in rows and making them visible to authorities, the drive to make people more secure by giving them the means to produce their own food, or the goal of having people sell surplus crops as a way of integrating them into local markets. It also revealed the impetuosity, satisficing, and guessing that was bound up in humanitarianism as state-building. In place of rationally produced security, there was disorder and uncertainty. Cracks in information were transmuted into cracks in plaster, and the gaps in planning mutated into the gaps in the floors through which insects entered houses to eat the sugar and flour delivered as food aid. The storms that continued to buffet the IDPs were more than metaphorical: in the hard rains of spring and summer, water pounded through the cottages, soaking the clothing and furniture that NGOs had distributed. In the summer heat waves, vegetables grown with seeds provided by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and painstakingly canned a few jars at a time spoiled as the temperature soared in cottages designed without cool basements. In Tsmindatsqali, both gardens and newly bought possessions were damaged in storms that came up from below: the land for the settlement was apparently only available because the water table there was so high that spring rains turned the camp into a swamp. Epistemologies of guessing and satisficing, transmuted into institutional adhocery, had material correlates in lived experience that shaped the benefits IDPs could derive from the aid they were given.

The chaos of aid not only made security and social reintegration in the present difficult but also made it nearly impossible for the IDPs to develop a rational plan for the future or to invest their own material resources in their new settlements. Even well into the second year of displacement, humanitarian projects were arriving erratically, landing in some settlements but not others, offering different things to different people without clear criteria for who received aid and who did not. *Première Urgence* might offer sheep and bees in one settlement but not ever come to another, for example. CARE had a multimillion-dollar social reintegration project for the settlements in Shida Kartli province but never came to Mtskheta-Mtian; in the context of that project some IDPs were offered thousands of dollars of agricultural equipment, while others, whose "business plans" were judged unacceptable for reasons their

authors never understood, were left out. Utility bills were paid—by whom, the IDPs never quite knew—for months, until one cold February day the lights and heat were cut off. Unbeknown to the residents of the settlements, the donor had stopped paying the bills, and the IDPs had racked up hundreds of lari in power bills that few of them could pay. “Figuring out what we’re going to get and when is like predicting the March weather,” said one man, illustrating his frustration with the inexplicable and erratic nature of the aid process.

Without knowing what kind of aid might come in the future, IDPs were hesitant to invest their own meager resources in improving their living standards or in starting small businesses. Without knowing whether social reintegration projects such as live-stock distributions or microcredit schemes might arrive at their specific locations, the IDPs were left paralyzed, unable to make decisions about which way to proceed in reestablishing themselves economically or socially. Their passivity and their dependence on aid, much decried by the humanitarians and the government, was not a moral failing or the result of emotional trauma. It was a product of adhocery, a mode of governance that claimed to be devoted to their social reintegration but in fact robbed them of the ability to join the local economy and discouraged them from becoming attached to their new homes.

The nation-state, too, was riven with cracks resulting from the institutional production of chaos. While the huge influx of humanitarian aid temporarily propped up the economy, the foreign direct investment that had allowed Saakashvili to claim it was providing the population with increased economic security plummeted from \$2 billion in 2007 to less than half that, \$759 million, in 2009.⁵³ As the economy slowed, Tbilisi was paralyzed for months by street protests organized by the opposition, which accused Saakashvili of recklessly attacking South Ossetia, bringing down the invasion, and creating the new wave of IDPs. As Saakashvili’s one-time patrons, the United States and the European Union, distanced themselves and began a rapprochement with Russia, Georgia found itself increasingly isolated. With Russian tanks perched at a forward base in Akhalkgori, a mere thirty-five miles from Tbilisi, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev pointed out the obvious threat to Georgian security, saying, “This is a direct signal to those . . . who get idiotic plans in their heads from time to time.”⁵⁴ Thus, despite the massive effort at state-building and the creation of security, Saakashvili was far from being able to guarantee the safety of the state or the Georgian population. On the hot nights of August 2009, a year after the war, the precariousness of the state was obvious most of all to the IDPs in the settlements just a few miles away from the de facto border, who lay awake in their beds, feeling the ground rumble as tanks prepared once again for battle. Although no attack came that summer, sniper fire back and forth across the border reminded everyone how unstable the situation was, and how possible war remained.

Adhocery and Domination

In her pathbreaking study of Hutu refugees in Tanzania, Liisa Maalki refers to the refugee camp as “a standardized, transferable device of power.”⁵⁵ The camp here is seen as a technology which aims to quarantine people stripped of political and social significance—people “who had lost all other qualities and specific relationships, except

that they were still human”—in order to constitute new forms of sovereignty under the pretext of humanitarian action.⁵⁶ As Agier says, the figure of the absolute victim, anonymous and suffering, “determines the meaning given to the space of the camp itself insofar as it is created and run according to the rule of humanitarian government” and thus becomes the subject of a totalitarian humanitarian force that can merely let live or make die.⁵⁷ For Arendt, Agamben, Agier, and Rancière alike, camps are points of entry into a new totalitarian sovereignty that overrides the rights of the nation-state in the interests of protecting human rights.

Yet, as the transformation of camps into settlements shows, the trend away from warehousing displaced people in spaces of exception and, instead, toward social reintegration suggests that humanitarians often seek to restore displaced people as social beings rather than reducing them to bare life. Intergovernmental agencies such as the United Nations, as well as donor governments, now often do so by actively intervening in state formation, partnering with states that seem to have the potential to become liberal democracies and “building capacity,” in order to push those states to transform the spaces which the displaced inhabit and so make them into vehicles for the reestablishment of productive social order.

But refugee settlements and the bureaucratic structures that enable their creation are not just technologies for the creation of order but also technologies for the production of chaos and disorder. To the Georgian IDPs sitting in their leaking cottages, wondering when aid would be delivered and if they could even use what came, the experience of humanitarianism was less one of being restored to full citizenship, or even one of domination, than of a whirl of incomprehensible activity, aid coming down from the sky and then, just as unpredictably, vanishing. Life inside the humanitarian bureaucratic order was less about oppression and disempowerment than it was about disorientation and bewilderment. As an elderly woman in Tserovani said, “To put it simply, we’re just very confused.”

It might be tempting to label this a case of bureaucratic failure. It would certainly be easy to see the shortcomings of the aid process in terms of deviation from the ideal-typical model in which administrative practices create order and then prescribe more of the same—better, improved technocratic management practices—as the remedy for the supposed “failures” of the humanitarian project. This is certainly the impulse that led to the cluster system in the first place, and that leads to the unremitting cycles of “new and improved” theories of aid management. It might also be tempting to see a covert plan behind these “failures,” a will to dominate that cares less about whether the IDPs receive usable shoes and watertight homes than it does about disempowering them, monitoring their movements, and creating new spaces for state incursions.⁵⁸

However, both of these explanations miss the point. “Failures” in aid delivery are not aberrations from a rational-calculative practice. Nor are they mere covers for more nefarious activity, such as attempts to dehumanize the displaced, render them surplus, or make it possible to kill them. The failures of humanitarianism stem from the fundamental epistemologies of the aid process, from modes of knowing and not-knowing that are integral to the endeavor of transforming the will to alleviate suffering into the concrete spaces of the refugee settlement. The chaos of aid is not a mere technical failure but an outgrowth of the fundamental ways that bureaucrats grasp the

world of the displaced and the ways they seek to govern it. It is intrinsic to the system, not a deviation from its proper operation. No matter what totalitarian ambitions the “international humanitarian order” or the leaders of individual states may have, the adhocery of humanitarian governance sharply limits the degree to which such ambitions can succeed.

NOTES

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 39. Peter Redfield, “Vital Mobility and the Humanitarian Kit,” in *Biosecurity Interventions*, ed. Stephen J. Collier and Andrew Lakoff (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 147–72.
 40. Bruno Latour, *Science in Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).
 41. One settlement, Verkhvebi, was built more than a year after the first thirty-five.
 42. Families with fewer than three members were not assigned cottages but moved into apartments created from renovated schools or military barracks. This led some families to split their children up and place them with grandparents, in the hope of getting an additional cottage—a practice which often led to the fracturing of the extended families at the heart of the Georgian kinship system and the long-term separation of parents and children.
 43. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.
 44. See also Agamben, *Homo Sacer*; Ticktin, “Where Ethics and Politics Meet”; and Redfield, “Doctors, Borders, and Life in Crisis.”
 45. Schueth, “Apparatus of Capture.”
 46. Because the IDPs are acutely aware of their dependence on the government and fear reprisals, I have used pseudonyms for all IDPs and changed their villages of origin. Government officials, employees of the UN, and NGO employees all spoke on the record, so I have used their real names and titles.
 47. Redfield, “Vital Mobility and the Humanitarian Kit.”
 48. OCHA, “Georgia Crisis: Flash Appeal” (2008).
 49. Herbert Simon, “A Behavioral Model of Rational Choice,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 69, no. 1 (1955): 99–118. See also Michael Byron, “Simon’s Revenge, or Incommensurability and Satisficing,” *Analysis* 65, no. 4 (2005): 311–15.
 50. Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority and the Work of Rule, 1917–1967* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008).
 51. Charles Tilly, “Invisible Elbow,” *Sociological Forum* 11, no. 4 (1996): 589–601.
 52. *Ibid.*, 593.
 53. Geostat, *Foreign Direct Investment* (Tbilisi, 2010).
 54. Pavel Felgenhauer, “The Russian Military Concentration in the Caucasus,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 6, no. 136 (2009), [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=35270](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=35270) (accessed September 17, 2011).
 55. Liisa Maalki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

56. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 336; Jacques Rancière, “Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2/3 (2004): 297–310.
57. Agier, “Humanity as an Identity.”
58. James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).