



Lecture Series “Signatures of World Society”

Humanitarianism on Demand: Labor, Platforms and the Politics of Value

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Focusing on the humanitarian aid industry in Dubai, this presentation examines how workers' labor generates both economic and political value for employers and the state. It shows how everyday aesthetic labor practices of 'looking good and sounding right' reconfigure 'crisis' from an investment liability into a facility, transforming otherwise banal warehouses and free zone setups into 'humanitarian' ones. Drawing on ethnographic observations and interviews with hub personnel in and connected to Dubai, it traces how calibrated looks and tones, choreographed tours and platform-facing publicity resituate intertwined political, economic and technical infrastructures as not only crisis-resilient, but designed for crisis in the first place. In doing so, this labor facilitates capital expansion while also acting as a mode of political valuation, legitimization and state-making: raising questions about where the state ends and the platform begins in the contemporary economy.

This lecture will also be transmitted via Zoom
Meeting ID: 696 7099 4418 – Passcode: 609070

