

CALL FOR PAPERS:

THINKING WITH THE SENSES: HISTORIES OF HUMANITARIAN SENTIMENT AND PRACTICE

University of Liverpool, UK, 13-14 May 2019

CFP deadline 4 March 2019

In order to engage and motivate diverse audiences, humanitarian actors have developed communicative practices that stimulate a wide range of sensory experiences. These have ranged from austerity lunches and sponsored fasts, to art exhibits and the production of craft products for sale; from protest songs and charity singles to the sensations of voluntourism. Humanitarian organisations have also been quick to embrace the possibilities offered by new technologies, from the use of the Kodak camera in the Congo Reform Movement at the start of nineteenth-century to the United Nations' recent use of immersive Virtual Reality headsets to encourage pledges of support for refugee camps and the Ebola crisis. Through these diverse activities, the full range of human senses have been engaged in the imagination of different kinds of global community, responsibility, and solidarity.

In recent years a rich body of research has begun to interrogate the role that visual – primarily print and broadcast – media has played in shaping humanitarian sentiments and practices. With this conference, we seek to both deepen and broaden these conversations by considering how attention to the full range of sensory perception might develop our understandings of historical and contemporary humanitarian practices, sentiments, movements and their impacts. How might thinking with the senses enable a better understanding of the landscapes humanitarians operate within, the environments that they shape and the worlds they imagine? Of course, humanitarians do not think or act in a vacuum. We are sensitive to the power, privileges and challenges inherent in humanitarian praxis. Therefore, we are keen to understand how giving due attention to the senses, perceptions, and perspectives of beneficiary, as well as donor, communities might better illuminate expressions of the humanitarian impulse across time and space.

We encourage submissions focussing on any geographic region and on any period from the nineteenth century to the present day.

We welcome abstracts addressing, but not limited to, any of the following themes:

- When, where, how and why have global visions of humanitarian need and action been articulated? Which visual symbols have best served these agendas?
- Out of which aesthetic traditions and artistic movements have the humanitarian sector's iconographies of bodies - in pain, suffering, in crisis, in action, distributing and in recovery – emerged? How does this shift across space and time?
- How have senses of hearing, touch, taste, smell, and spatial awareness been stimulated to foster humanitarian feeling? What role have embodied experiences of

pain, hunger, discomfort, etc. played in the development and communication of humanitarian sentiment?

- Which sonic traditions, forms and resonances have most effectively evoked humanitarian sentiment? Where and why?
- How have visual and sonic technologies been transformed by their entanglement in informal humanitarian movements, professional humanitarian campaigns and interventions?
- How might donors who have previously been recipients of aid, envision the role of humanitarian benefactor differently?
- How can art, music, material culture, food, cooking or the built environment act as a repository for individual or collective memory of a humanitarian crisis among affected communities?
- How might a focus on sensory perception illuminate ethical concerns: the imbrication of humanitarianism in hierarchies of race, gender, class and sexuality as well as its entanglement with modern systems of governance from the colonial and imperial, to the national and neoliberal?
- What role have the visual and performing arts played in humanitarian projects such as those addressing reconciliation or rehabilitation?
- How do the sounds, smells and visions of humanitarian campaigning differ from those of solidarity movements?

This conference will take place at the University of Liverpool, 13-14 May 2019.

We welcome paper proposals from academics at all stages of their careers, working in all disciplines. We will have a limited number of bursaries designed to enable PGR, part-time and unwaged ECRs, as well as independent scholars to attend. If you are interested in applying for one of these bursaries please indicate this when you submit your proposal. We are also working to keep costs low for our other speakers.

Please submit proposals of 350 words max. for a 15-20 minute paper, along with a short biography (no more than 150 words) to Anna Bocking-Welch and Wendy Asquith at: (wendy.asquith@nottingham.ac.uk).

Deadline: 4 March 2019

LEVERHULME
TRUST

