

**Dr. Gemma Sou, RMIT University Vice Chancellor's Fellow, [gemma.sou@rmit.edu.au](mailto:gemma.sou@rmit.edu.au)**

### **Everyday humanitarianism: Practice, ambiguities and limits**

Everyday humanitarianism refers to an expanded series of practices in the everyday lives of citizens that purport to make a difference outside the traditional boundaries of humanitarian activity (Richey 2018). This can include raising awareness, fundraising, political interventions, policy lobbying or diplomacy in quiet rooms with powerful organizations, collaborations with the private sector, armed interventions, private refugee sponsorship, training, workshops, and projects to transform livelihoods, the spread of diseases, environmental change, infrastructure or gender relations. But it may also include quotidian life - shopping, following social media accounts and liking celebrity campaigns or tweeting.

The scope of what constitutes the humanitarianism worthy of study must be expanded beyond the traditional scope of providing urgent help in times of crisis to “distant sufferers”, and further beyond the security and ongoing human rights actions to include everyday humanitarianism. Everyday humanitarianism is situated in a complex history of North-South relations and may contribute to further production of interconnected and highly unequal subjectivities of people who help and those who need it. This session seeks papers that attempt to address such questions, by expanding existing understandings of humanitarianism to inter-disciplinary and multi-method approaches towards the study of “helping” and its multiple conceptions and forms of justification, and to reflect on their consequences for relations between those who “help” and those who are “helped”.

Indicative questions include:

- Who are the everyday humanitarians?
- Where does everyday humanitarianism take place?
- How is everyday humanitarian perceived and experienced by those in “need”?
- How are these practices unsettling notions of expertise, authority, and knowledge in humanitarian spaces?
- What does everyday humanitarianism look like in the age of market-driven, digital media-based action?
- What are the implications of everyday humanitarianism for the ethics and politics of contemporary benevolence?
- What happens to ideals such as justice, equality, humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence during everyday humanitarian practices which take place at all levels of society from the individual to the state and from the community-based organization to the corporation?