

**Resisting Technocolonialism:  
Reimagining ‘Technologies for Social Justice’ through Participatory Action  
Research**

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Digital technologies and AI are increasingly ubiquitous in humanitarian operations among refugees. Several of these innovations are understood as part of the wider phenomenon of ‘technology for social good’, or ‘AI for social good’. In my recent book, I theorise such developments as ‘technocolonialism’, which refers to how digital innovation, data and AI practices engender new forms of violence and new inequities between global majority and global minority worlds. My talk takes as a point of departure the practices of resistance to technocolonialism and the need to respond to the question: what can be done? Just like colonialism is a story of resistance, technocolonialism is contested. Recognising the space for contestation is crucial for reimagining technological systems and solidarities. The talk will outline visual participatory action research as a suitable method for working collaboratively with our refugee interlocutors. To illustrate this approach, I draw on current research in refugee camps in Thailand – in collaboration with Charlie Hill and Hayso Thako – where our participants were able to express the values they prioritise in reimagining digital identity systems through art and visual methods. In so doing, I decentre the notion of ‘technology for good’, which is narrowly associated with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and co-opted by the tech industry, to reimagine technologies in the ‘pluriverse’ (Escobar, 2018) and for social justice.



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emergencies. She is currently Principal Investigator on a British Academy grant on digital identity programmes in refugee camps in Thailand. Her latest book [\*Technocolonialism: when technology for good is harmful\*](#) was published in November 2024. Earlier books include *Mediating the Nation: News, audiences and the politics of identity* and *Migration and New Media: transnational families and polymedia*.