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Humanitarian drones: ethics issues

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Drones in Humanitarian Action survey (2016)

- Despite growing interest, no systematic effort has been made to understand if, how, and in what circumstances the use of drones can deliver added value to humanitarian work.
- This survey begins the important work of developing a baseline for considering the practical added value of drones, and for identifying the normative dilemmas and challenges to humanitarian imperatives and principles that might arise from their use.

What's going on? A little bit of drone theory

What do «**outsiders**» want: building a **moral economy** around humanitarian drones to sanitize drones, open civil airspace in the global North + South, create business opportunities.

What do «**we**» (humanitarians) want: something to **fix our Problems with Everything**. Rights-based approaches couldn't do it, lets try with technology!

Drone theory (I): Utopianism

- According to Segal (1986), **technological utopianism** is a belief in technological progress as inevitable, and in technology as the vehicle for achieving a “perfect” society in the near future.
- In the cosmology of **drone utopianism**, technology substitutes for politics, becoming the solution for a raft of problems from insecurity to resource inequality and injustice.

Drone theory (II): Building a moral economy for drones

- **The concept:** Environment in which social expectations, cultural transactions, and emotional investments collectively create a *shared understanding between the participants in an economic exchange*.
- **Objective:** to make drones seem more useful, safe and legitimate and ease the path to civil airspace access while underscoring issues of cost, effectiveness and precision.

Ethics and Standards: a case of lost ownerships?

Drone specific instruments

- UAVIATORs Code of Conduct Initiative.
- Sheffield 2016: Need for a separate code of Cargo drones.

Humanitarian innovation (nothing on drones):

- “The Red Cross and Red Crescent’s Principled Approach to Innovation” (2015).
- Oxford/HIP Principles for Ethical Humanitarian Innovation.

Responsible data movement: eventually its all about data

Humanitarian Drone Ethics: Where do we go?

- **Getting sober:** When is it useful and ethical to use drones & how?
- Adopt norms re **responsible data** from humanitarian community.
- Something is **special with drones:** body, pilots and iconic status.
- Local and organic reflections on ethics and management of drones & their pilots necessary. That would be **you**.
- «Somebody» should take ownership on standardization and crunching **community standards for ethical drone use**.
- The new **Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation (GAHI):** an opportunity **for drone ethics?**

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