

Project Summary:

My Independent Social Research Foundation Early Career Research Fellowship addressed the following question: how do techno-political projects in the security and policing sectors perform regimes of permissible and non-permissible violence? I investigated this question through European, Palestinian and Israeli joint ventures in the design and development of security and policing technologies. Drawing on the work of Timothy Mitchell and Helga Tawil-Souri this project advanced a Social Anthropological understanding of techno-politics. Techno-political projects allow communities to tell stories about the legitimate use of violence through myths about intelligence and progress and fantasies about mastery and control. I conducted multi-site ethnographic research to observe how the design and trade of policing technologies act as points of contact through which these myths travel. Following from this, the project developed a queer and decolonial interrogation of what Mitchell calls the spectacle of European order and adjudication. Through the production of a drag performance I then moved to perform those stories written out of the state's techno-political production and management of violence.

Fieldwork:

In the first few months of my Early Career Research Fellowship I attended EU Commission Horizon2020 networking events in the Securing Societies section, as well as other security and counter-terrorist trade shows in the European context. The project began to identify how scientists, engineers and investors in the security and policing sectors respond and co-opt social crises for capital gains through a performed desire and belief in their ability to innovate. I followed this provocation into the Occupied Palestinian Territories. My principle research sites included the Israeli export market in the arms industry. I attended trade shows, security conferences and start-up competitions in the policing and security sectors. In addition, I interviewed technology developers and export brokers. In these sites, the spectacle of technology appears to make permissible extreme violence. Performances of a belief in intelligence, progress and mastery performed through various surveillance and policing technologies distorts the presence of the Palestinian subject, always a target, always dangerous.

The second principle research site, investigated the Palestinian Civil Police and their training relationship with the EU police training mission, the EUPOL COPPS. I traced the various technologies that moved between the actors, such as forensic equipment, mapping equipment, software systems and data management systems. The technologies transferred to the Palestinian Civil Police are intended to manage the policing of Palestinians. The project interrogates how techno-political responses in the policing sector register certain forms of violence and ignore others. This often occurs along racial and ethnic lines. European consultants, policemen, former service men would share with me their continuous witness to Israeli crimes against the Palestinian. The European presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, however is to impose upon, interfere and adjudicate Palestinian and not Israeli crime.

Output:

The principle research output from my Independent Social Research Foundation fellowship was the production of a performance pieced entitled: "The Vein, the Fingerprint Machine and the Automatic Speed Detector." I produced a 45-minute solo performance piece, which used tactics and strategies laden in drag performance such

as satire, hyperbole, melancholy and code switching to distort the spectacle of technology. In each scene I embody a different security object and I draw on my interviews and ethnographic research to tell of the violences generated and missed in technological policing. Performative methods, I argue account for the excesses denied and circumscribed in the myths of technological innovation.

The premier of the show was the P21 Art Gallery in London on 10 November 2019 and was followed up with shows in universities and theatres across the UK and Europe. The performance opens up interdisciplinary conversations on technology and colonial violence and was often accompanied by workshops and panels with scholars from Politics, Law, International Relations, Media Studies and Technology Studies, as well as performance artists and political commentators. In December 2019, I was especially invited to show my work at a closed workshop, called the “The Erosion of the Civilian” with members of Human Rights Watch, Médecins Sans Frontières and Amnesty International. The performance piece has been archived and is being prepared for publication.

This performative and interdisciplinary approach to research attracts audiences from outside of the academy. I performed the work at the Brighton Fringe Festival for six nights in May 2019 and received a four-out-four star review from a Brighton-based theatre critic. I have future shows planned for the Rich Mix Theatre in Tower Hamlets, London as part of a special education series on technology.

[Link to the review:](https://broadwaybaby.com/shows/the-vein-the-fingerprint-machine-and-the-automatic-speed-detector/743933?fbclid=IwAR1fGMBtVQMhm5bJtalcaVXSKJabI7lddd4X1ixvjF-Ueicmdn7gbBYjQ_o)

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