



PICTURE IS AUTHOR'S OWN
GRAFFITI BY UNKNOWN ARTIST

OTHERED, SILENCED AND SCAPEGOATED

UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATED SECURITY OF
MARGINALISED POPULATIONS IN LEBANON

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WHY LEBANON?

SITUATING DIGITAL SECURITY IN LEBANON

- Post-conflict context
 - Sectarian governance
 - Corruption
 - Financial collapse
 - Infrastructure
 - Electricity
 - Internet access



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SILOS SMOKING THE MEMORY BUT THE REALITY OF THE PORT PLAST

CONCEPTUAL GROUNDING

POST-CONFLICT CONTINUUM

ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY, IDENTITY AND POSITIVE SECURITY

SECURITY FOR HIGHER RISK POPULATIONS

SCAPEGOATING, BLAME AND OTHERING

METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

RESEARCH DESIGN

2 weeks of ethnographic fieldwork, including interviews, in Beirut, Lebanon, July 2022.

ETHNOGRAPHICALLY INFORMED

- We refer to our work as ethnographically informed to acknowledge the short-term nature of the fieldwork
 - Everyday observations: supermarkets, accommodation, transportation
 - Protests
 - Open mic night
 - Walking tour city

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

- 13 interviews with participants knowledgeable about the digital security and socio-political landscape in Lebanon

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Full approval by institutional research ethics committee and informed consent
- Data minimisation



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FINDINGS

TECHNOLOGICAL STATE CONTROL

"One participant explained that the government was purposefully slow to digitalise services because "the more paperwork the better the corruption."

KEY POINTS:

- Corruption ingrained into digital government processes.
- Greater freedom of expression in Beirut than elsewhere in Lebanon.
- An assumption that the state has access to communications such as WhatsApp.

PRACTICES OF OTHERING LGBTQI+ AS AN 'OTHER'

“Dozens of groups were created online and most of them I would say are [government] intelligence, part of the system, threatening those who are willing to have a sit-in in front of the Ministry of Interior. Threatening them with attacks, beatings and even killing.”

KEY POINTS:

- Authority-driven incitements of online and offline violence reinforce LGBTQI+ community as 'Other' in society.
- Challenge social and moral politics and divert attention economic crisis.
- Polarisation of social media rhetoric leading to silencing.

SITUATING ACCOUNTABILITY

“Your name, how it is written, how it could be written in so many variations [when translated from Arabic to other languages]; so in one [government] system it could be different to another [. . .] because of the lack of [consistent] identity [documents] you might find different variations of my name.”

KEY POINTS:

- Western based systems not recognising Arabic names during identify verification processes
- Need greater resources and diversity within content moderation teams to identify harms which prevail in post-conflict contexts where you need specific cultural knowledge to understand that.

DISCUSSION

POSITIVE SECURITY FOR POST CONFLICT SETTINGS

- Opportunity for security researchers to work with post-conflict communities to co-create hopeful security technology
- Digital security to enhance dialogue across fragmented societies
- A positive security approach that works towards a reconciliation of society in post-conflict Lebanon.



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POSITIVE SECURITY FOR POST CONFLICT SETTINGS

- Digital memorials:
 - Transparently curating narratives of othering that unfold online would enable credible accounts of violence to be presented back to current and future generations of Lebanese, in support of reconciling historically rooted violence.
 - Development and maintenance of secure digital platforms for such memorials while safeguarding accessibility and ownership are important matters for security in this context.

FUTURE

SITUATING DIGITAL SECURITY IN POST-CONFLICT SETTINGS

COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES

ETHNOGRAPHY



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