

Policing's contested relationalities

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Policing's geographic location and borders have long been taken for rather than being subjects of explicit analysis and theorization. Policing is most frequently associated with a small scale and the 'domestic' realm, assuming a mythic status as a quintessentially local state institution (Seigel 2018). Yet as policing's colonial and imperial origins (Brogden 1987) have been excavated and recuperated in recent years, this mythic status is emerging as a vigorous and productive site of reevaluation across a range of social science fields (Schrader 2019; Seigel 2018) including IR (Honke and Muller 2016; Howell 2018; Neolcleous 2014). This relational focus, however, is not merely descriptive of police in its actually existing forms. It has shown how the routine transgressions of the political and geographic boundaries of police have been predicated on comparisons between different sites that have in turn enabled these circulations to take place and made possible the exchange of ideas, logics and tactics between different state authorities, enabling officials to make the case for new law and order interventions. Building on these conversations, this panel grapples with two key dimensions of the contested relationalities of policing. First, is how conceptual and material connections across time inform state violence against racialized communities. Second, is how attending to contested relationalities might inform anti-colonial, anti-racist and abolitionist organizing in specific locations but also transnationally. Bringing together case studies from Palestine, the US, India and the UK, the panel reflects on how these examples reflect common logics, patterns and techniques of pacification and order-making but also disjunctures between multiple ontologies of violence and order-making and possible frictions at play in the various border crossings at play in police work.

Track Classification: Colonial, Postcolonial and Decolonial Working Group