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Title: Touching Fear, Fearing Touch: Touring the West Bank in Israel/Palestine

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Abstract:

In this presentation I explore the ways in which sensuous touch contributes to co-constructions of affective and emotional subjectivities in a tourism context in the West Bank in Israel/Palestine. Drawing on socio-spatial theories of haptics, touch and fear are argued to be part of a sensuous hapticity, intimately connected and happening within and around places and bodies—of tourists, local guides and soldiers—in conflict. The location of the West Bank in the heart of the ongoing conflict turns tourism mobilities into a contested tool of exclusion of some, mainly locals, whether Israelis or Palestinians, who are positioned not as free in the same way as tourists and/or soldiers. The West Bank wall and its checkpoints have become tourist attractions, pervasive and ever present in the Israeli/Palestinian landscape enticing most tourists in the area. Empirical examples are drawn from fieldwork conducted in Israel/Palestine in 2010 and 2017/2018 where interviews were undertaken with local tour guides and international tourists.
