

<b>Institution:</b> Goldsmiths, University of London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 32, Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Interrogating State Claims after Police violence: The Killing of Harith Augustus		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2018-9		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Professor Eyal Weizman	Professor of Spatial & Visual Cultures; Principal Investigator	2005 –
Christina Varvia	Lead Researcher	2015-2020
Nathan Su	Researcher	2017-2019
Simone Rowat	Researcher and Filmmaker	2017-2019
Nicholas Zembashi	Researcher	2018-
Tom James	Researcher	2019-
Olukoye Akinkugbe	Researcher	2019-
Kishan Bhopal	Researcher	2019-
Alican Akturk	Researcher	2018-19
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2019		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>  <p>Using digital modelling, spatial analysis, and investigative reporting techniques, Forensic Architecture (FA), a research agency within the Visual Cultures department at Goldsmiths, exposed serious instances of code violations and evidence mishandling by the Chicago Police Department (CPD) and the city's Civilian Office for Police Accountability (COPA) in relation to the killing of a Black man in the city's South Shore district in 2018.</p> <p>This research became an exemplar study in the contemporary investigation of police killings through media evidence; it has improved processes for storing and releasing evidence and precipitated state lawsuits in serious cases of code violations and evidence mishandling. Specifically, it led directly to the release of critical new evidence, media reporting, and wider public awareness and understanding of the event, and impacted city and police department policy, resulting in lawsuits at federal and state level.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>  <p>In 2018, Forensic Architecture (FA) was invited by the Invisible Institute, a Chicago-based investigative reporting institution, to investigate the killing of Chicago resident Harith Augustus in the course of a routine stop-and-search by CPD officers, using video evidence including police body-worn cameras, dashboard cameras, and CCTV [3.1].</p> <p>The project team deployed spatial- and image-analytic techniques developed by FA since 2010, and a research approach described as 'counter-forensics', developed by the agency's founder-director Professor Weizman. Where forensics is the privilege of the state, proceeding from analysis of a crime scene to the identification and arrest of a suspect,</p>		

counter-forensics is made necessary when the perpetrator of the alleged crime is themselves an agent of the state. Counter-forensics turns the 'forensic gaze' back onto the state, and to do so must adopt innovative practices in research, evidence-gathering, and presentation [3.2].

FA has pioneered the use of digital models in video and image analysis for 'open source' investigations, including video and image analysis through digital modelling [3.2] [3.3]. Such a synthesis of architectural techniques, expert scientific analysis, activist sensibilities, 'open source' and traditional reporting, and the 'situated knowledge' of communities and individuals affected by state violence is a cornerstone of FA's theoretical underpinning, which has been called 'open verification' [3.3].

This investigation also drew upon an interview technique developed by FA, with support from Goldsmiths' Forensic Psychology department, known as 'situated testimony'. Situated testimony uses 3D models to aid the process of interviewing and gathering testimony from witnesses of the incidents that FA investigates. Memories of traumatic or violent episodes can often be elusive, or distorted, but the use of digital architectural models has a productive effect on a witness's recollection. Together with an architectural researcher, a witness reconstructs the scene of an event, exploring and accessing their memories of the episode in a controlled and secure manner [3.4].

In this case, FA interviewed a Chicago-based activist and witness to the protests that followed in the hours after the killing. Video footage recorded during those protests show police repeatedly using excessive force against civilians, significantly beyond the measures necessary to secure the 'crime scene' [3.1]. By synchronising the available footage and modelling the scene digitally, FA researchers could move between and observe the unfolding scene from multiple perspectives, including from the perspective of the victim. Together with Dr Tiago Branco, a professor of neuroscience from University College, London, the research team also scrutinised the actions of the officers involved in the stop-and-search from a psychological perspective.

This process identified consistent behaviours and dispositions by the officers that served to escalate and exacerbate a confrontational situation, in violation of clear CPD protocols. Furthermore, through traditional reporting techniques, FA identified video evidence referred to in police documents which had not been made public, despite a court order mandating the release of all videos pertaining to the case. Through the Freedom of Information Act, FA and our partners forced the publication of those videos, which contained additional critical evidence about the actions of officers.

### 3. References to the research

[3.1] Weizman et al, [The Killing of Harith Augustus](#), Forensic Architecture, (2019) accessed 17 November 2020 [Website] Available online.

[3.2] Eyal Weizman and Anselm Franke (eds), *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Sternberg, 2014) [Book] Available on request.

[3.3] Eyal Weizman, [Open Verification](#), *E-Flux* (2019), accessed 17 November 2020 [Article] Available online/on request.

[3.4] Eyal Weizman, 'The Architecture of Memory', in Eyal Weizman, *Forensic*

*Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (Zone Books, 2017) [Book chapter] Submitted to REF2.

#### 4. Details of the impact

##### **Impact 1: FA's research supports claims made by the victim's family and local community and raises awareness of state violence against Black people**

Black communities around Chicago have experienced a long history of police violence. The failure to release important video evidence in this case recalled a controversial 2014 murder by a Chicago police officer of a 17-year-old black youth, Laquan McDonald. That case led to the introduction of new rules regarding the release of video material, which our investigation demonstrated were clearly broken in this case.

In this context, FA's research tangibly impacted the campaigning work of those communities, supporting claims about the relationships between those communities and the CPD, providing evidence for continued failures of policing [5.1]. The research also reignited discussion around the case, which had hitherto subsided, and, in forcing the release of new evidence (as discussed below), was beneficial to the family and community around Harith Augustus, providing new insight into a case of substantial public interest [5.6].

According to a member of the Invisible Institute team, as of September-October 2019, 'For many viewers, this is the most detailed account of state violence against a Black person they've seen' [5.5].

##### **Impact 2: Action by FA and partners forces the release of new evidence in a case of public interest leading to a contempt of court case**

'The FA-II [Invisible Institute] investigation forced disclosure of highly relevant evidence that had been withheld by the city, either by inadvertence or design' [5.4].

The release of video footage of the incident filmed from the dashboard of a police vehicle tangibly and demonstrably changed the course of the investigation into the potentially wrongful killing of a civilian by police [5.3]. Not only was the footage itself informational, informing the public's understanding of the case, but the failure to release footage until that time was also a violation, by COPA, of a state court order. By forcing compliance with existing court orders, FA's research benefitted the public of the state of Illinois.

As a result of FA's findings, a contempt of court case has been filed against the Mayor's office, CPD and COPA over the failure to release this evidence [5.2]. The continued further release of material in response to this research has made a tangibly difference to the pursuit and proper administration of justice in that case;

'A wrongful death lawsuit brought by the family of Harith Augustus is pending. If the case goes to trial, the lawyers for the family intend to make use of the "Six Durations" project in presenting their case. In the event the case is settled before trial, the existence of the project will strengthen the family's hand in seeking a favourable settlement' [5.4].

##### **Impact 3: State authorities conduct internal inquiries into their procedures**

According to their own statements, at least three Chicago city authorities - the CPD, COPA, and the office of the Mayor - have commenced internal inquiry and review processes relating

to the failures highlighted by our investigation. The Mayor's office promised 'all necessary actions to ensure nothing but full compliance... going forward' [5.8]. The CPD stated that it 'will be opening an inquiry' and COPA's statement said that a 'thorough internal review' had already begun and that 'oversight management protocols and processes' would be reviewed [5.8]. Scrutiny and improvement of these processes will have a direct and beneficial impact upon the operation of state institutions and oversight bodies, with the result of improving policing practices.

#### **Impact 4: Research produces new cultural artefacts and new ways of thinking**

According to the Director of the Invisible Institute, an experienced investigative reporter in the city, FA's investigation was a landmark event, setting a new bar for the investigation of police shootings and changing the popular understanding of the nature and possibility of video evidence [5.4]. This research was exhibited at the prestigious Chicago Architecture Biennial, demonstrating vital new ways to interrogate police violence [5.7].

The investigation process also trained members of staff at the Invisible Institute in the collection and processing of evidence according to FAs methods, training new researchers and students in the technical and theoretical processes that underwrite its own conclusions and impact:

'The project established a new standard for investigations of human rights abuses by police in cases in which video evidence is available. In this respect, it has empowered civil society groups to question official narratives and to conduct their own counter-investigations' [5.4].

'Working alongside Forensic Architecture benefited me personally, as a researcher, in developing and complementing my research skills with new techniques and practices' [5.5].

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

[5.1] Jamie Kalven and Eyal Weizman, '[How Chicago Police Created a False Narrative After Officers Killed Harith Augustus](#)', *The Intercept*, September 2019, [retrieved 17 November 2020]

[5.2] Text of a [legal filing against the Chicago Police Department](#), September 2019 [retrieved 17 November 2020]

[5.3] CST Editorial board, '[Unraveling the mystery of missing videos in the death of Harith Augustus](#)', *Chicago Sun Times*, October 2019, [retrieved 17 November 2020]

[5.4] Statement by Executive Director, Invisible Institute, Chicago

[5.5] Statement by Director of Data, Invisible Institute, Chicago

[5.6] Blair Kamin, '[Architects Challenge Police Account of Chicago Barber's Shooting Death Using Computer Modelling and a Second-by-Second Video](#)', *The Chicago Tribune*, September 2019 [retrieved 17 November 2020]

[5.7] Sarah Cascone, '[Did Forensic Architecture Prove That Police Unlawfully Killed a Man? The Collective's New Work Breaks Down a Tragedy, Frame by Frame](#)', *ArtNet News*, September 2019 [retrieved 17 November 2020]

[5.8] Statements by COPA and CPD quoted in Jamie Kalven, '[Chicago Releases Two Additional Videos of Police Killing of Harith Augustus](#)', *The Intercept*, September 2019 [retrieved 17 November 2020]