

# Fellows

## Hamid Ekbia

IFK\_Senior Fellow

Duration of fellowship

01. March 2016 bis 30. June 2016

## Hamid Ekbia

### PROJECT TITLE

Technologies of (Dis)Order: Drones, Conflict, and Crisis

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Drones are, in a deep sense, cultural artifacts that stand for the fundamental hopes and fears of a certain populace, as well as for the continuation of the colonialist project of bringing non-Western cultures in line with modernist imaginaries. The historical impact of drones can therefore be best understood in terms of their cultural significations, having to do with their role as tools of “modernization”. Drones will play this role even if they are not around, tamed by legal and moral constraints — and that is their *real* power. At the same time, drone warfare cultivates a particular popular psychology that is heavily invested in the geographic, cultural, and technological distance between the two sides of the “war”. The layers of mediation generated through these separations give rise to, and feed off of, a kind of apathy that is amplified and mystified by the false sense of proximity offered by digital technology. This mediated apathy manifests itself differently in different populations (warriors, leaders, policy makers, the public), but it shares certain attributes across the board. This project examines the potential of drones for creating (dis)order at psychological, societal, and global levels, and for regenerating crisis.

## **CV**

Hamid Ekbia is Professor of Informatics, Cognitive Science, and International Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington, where he also directs the Center for Research on Mediated Interaction. He is interested in the political economy of computing and in how technologies mediate socio-economic relations in modern societies. His book "Artificial Dreams: The Quest for Non-Biological Intelligence" (Cambridge University Press, 2008) was a critical-technical analysis of Artificial Intelligence. His new co-authored book, "Heteromation and Other Stories of Computing and Capitalism", examines computer-mediated modes of value extraction in capitalist economies (MIT Press, 2016). He is the co-editor of a volume titled "Big Data Is Not a Monolith" (MIT Press, 2016). A forthcoming manuscript studies armed drones as cultural artifacts that signify a historical project of modernist domination. In the summer of 2014, Ekbia co-organized a symposium on "Reconfiguring Global Space: The Geography, Politics, and Ethics of Drone Warfare".

## **Publications**

Technologies of (Dis)Order: Drones, Conflict, and Crisis, forthcoming; with Nardi, B., Heteromation and Other Stories of Computing and Capitalism, in press; Artificial Dreams: The Quest for Non-Biological Intelligence, Cambridge, 2008.