The modular security toolbox

Assembling state and citizenship in Jerusalem

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CONCLUSION

In this doctoral dissertation I have explored how, and to what end, state security actors pursue security pluralization and privatization in Jerusalem – and what are the implications of these processes for the (re)production of differentiated citizenship and its negotiation. Drawing on my empirical research in Jerusalem, I have argued that state security actors assemble additional public and private actors, materialities and technologies, and plug these into a state-led form of security provision, in order to enhance their capacity to pursue controversial security policies that they would be unable, or unwilling, to pursue otherwise. I conceptualized this process as the assembling of a modular security toolbox, in which different public and private modules, that normally fall outside the scope of the police, the military and the criminal justice system, are plugged in and out of a security toolbox. This re-shuffling of the security landscape has important political implications. I have highlighted how the assembling of a modular security toolbox can entail the deliberate differential (re)distribution of rights, resources and political decision-making. In other words, this modular form of security (re)produces unequal substantive citizenship between those deemed worthy of enhanced protection and those designated as security threats.

In making this argument, my dissertation has sought to make a contribution to current scholarly debates on security assemblages, on security privatization and pluralization, on the (re)production of citizenship, and on the transformation of the state in an age of neoliberal governance. In advancing a conceptualization of modular security, I called for a focus on the question of intentionality in the debate on security assemblages. My proposition of an actively-crafted and local-oriented modular security toolbox aims to be of use to those security scholars who engage in assemblage theory, yet wish to account for the human agency involved in the assembling of assemblages. In this dissertation I highlighted the role of security pluralization in the transformation of the state, bringing to the

fore the process in which more and more state actors, beyond the police, military and the justice system, are enlisted in the service of security provision. I further extended the debate on the fate of the state in a neoliberal era by demonstrating how security privatization can reinforce, rather than erode, state actors' capacities to territorialize restive urban areas beyond the full grasp of the state. My contribution to the debate on citizenship lies in underlining how the (re)production of differentiated citizenship is not merely a by-product of security pluralization and privatization, but can instead be its desired aim. This proposition further highlights how additional 'organizing logics', such as the ethnocratic and the colonial, can adjoin the neoliberal dynamic in directing the governance of security and the (re)assembly of the state.

I have explored the assembling of a modular security toolbox through the case of Jerusalem, where I conducted extensive fieldwork in the context of this research. Jerusalem, where Israeli security provision is torn between the application of brute force and the nominal adherence to a democratic rule of law, provides a good example of the dynamics that lie at the core of this research. Each of the four empirical chapters of this dissertation brought to the fore a different facet of the assembling of a modular security toolbox. Chapter 3 presented a specification of the concept of modular security, by elaborating how, and to what end, Israeli state security actors enlist pluralized state security actors, materialities, and technologies in Jerusalem. In Chapter 4, I went to examine in more detail the privatization of security through the case study of outsourced security provision at Jewish-Israeli settlement compounds in East Jerusalem. My findings highlighted how the assembling of private security actors can reinforce, rather than erode, the capacities of state security actors, by enabling them to pursue territorialization while evading accountability and deflecting public and legal challenges to controversial state-led projects. Chapter 5 focused on the plurality of material, affective, managerial and temporal security interven-

tions at checkpoints, demonstrating how these are assembled towards a differential production of (un)certainty. In Chapter 6, the last empirical chapter of this dissertation, I explored how – in additional to state security actors – urban residents also assemble a toolbox populated by divergent practices, performances, materialities and social relations in contesting and claiming citizenship rights. Together, the findings presented throughout this dissertation how the modular reassembling of security provision results in a deliberate unequal distribution of rights, resources and political decision-making between different urban residents.

Jerusalem, as seen through the pages of this dissertation, is a city where the transformation of the security landscape has grave political, social and economic consequences. The assembling of a modular security toolbox involves a perilous balancing act between conspicuous colonial violence and the normative pursuit of security under democratic rule of law. While Jerusalem remains in the international spotlight, Israeli state security actors enlist of additional public and private security modules to avoid legal and public accountability for their controversial policies. Palestinian Jerusalemites are at the receiving end of the Israeli move towards security pluralization and privatization: their neighborhoods are transformed into garrisons and battle zones, their voices stifled through punitive measures, their mobility impeded, and their right to live in their home city denied. These were common topics of discussion with such as Hussam, Majed, Nevin, Rafat, Hadil and other Palestinian interlocutors. Yet even while facing overwhelming odds, Palestinian Jerusalemites devote extensive efforts to negotiate and resist Israeli security interventions.

As my conversations with current and former Israeli security agents can testify, the Israeli modular security toolbox is far from comprehensive, and it is possible to identify cracks, dyssynchronies, misunderstandings, and personal or organizational power struggles amongst the security actors in-

volved. I have sought to highlight the dynamic, unstable nature of the Israeli modular security toolbox, which is continuously assembled and disassembled, with different modules plugged in and out, according to narrowly-defined security needs. The modular security toolbox is dispatched repeatedly to put out fires, but never aimed at resolving the underlying cause of conflict. In the absence of tangible prospects for a political resolution, ad-hoc security arrangements become a solution, albeit a temporary and untenable one, to maintain the status quo in a purportedly intractable conflict.

The implications of this dissertation's findings extend far beyond Jerusalem, to other cases where state actors assemble a modular security toolbox in attempts to overcome operational and legal limitations to their controversial security policies. From cases of stringent migration management employing private security contractors (Athwal 2015), to anti-radicalization programs imposing preventative roles on social and educational institutions (Lindekilde 2012), from foreign military interventions enlisting private militias (Avant 2006) to mass-surveillance programs collecting information through intermediaries, from public-private mass incarceration (Doty and Wheatly 2013) to pluralized deportation regimes (Kalir and Wissink 2016), it is possible to identify a broader trend unfolding. Security actors worldwide are enlisting and instructing pluralized and privatized actors, technologies and materialities in order to reinforce their capacities and avoid accountability for their controversial policies. While each case is different, a common thread can be found weaving through the plurality of modules enlisted. Their reconfiguration towards a state-led security intervention precipitates the differential allocation of rights, resources and privileges according to a logic of protection (Huysmans 2006) in which populations are sorted on a spectrum between those considered worthy of enhanced protection, and those designated as potential threats.

Jerusalem is not merely an urban location where we can identify these dynamics. It may also be a harbinger of things to come. With the export of Israeli security knowledge, technologies and practices flourishing in line with the growing global demand for anti-terrorism measures, the models developed in Jerusalem and explored in this dissertation can be – and are being – transplanted elsewhere (Grassiani 2017), with far-reaching implications for the security landscape worldwide.

(RE)ASSEMBLING SECURITY LANDSCAPES

In this work I have drawn on assemblage approaches (Deleuze and Guattari 1998) that highlight composite configurations (Delanda 2006a) in which different actors and actants, including technologies and materialities, are continuously brought together and separated. I have chosen to use the language of modularity to emphasize the intentional efforts and the importance of key actors involved in the assembling of a modular security toolbox. While this focus on intentionality distinguishes my approach from some other approaches to security assemblages, it shares the broader relational emphasis of assemblage theory, which has proved highly productive in attending to how security undergoes pluralization and privatization. Such approaches allows scholars to trace the relations between unexpected actors and actants, and the implications of these relations on citizens and security agents alike.[18]

18   The fruitfulness of addressing the emergence of public-private security assemblages in urban settings can be seen in the scholarly work of my colleagues in the same research project, SECURCIT, who conducted research in settings as diverse as Kingston (Jamaica), Nairobi (Kenya), Recife (Brazil) and Miami (US).

My specific approach, framed through the lens of modularity, involved a primary focus on the human agency embedded, though often ignored (Brenner et al. 2011: 236), in assemblage approaches. As Li (2007) suggests, assemblages never emerge out of thin air; someone, or something, is needed to bring together diverse elements and the relations between them. This focus on the intentionality of assembling led me to question why and how state security actors seek to enlist additional actors, technologies and materialities in the service of a state-led security provision. As I have highlighted throughout, the assembling of a modular toolbox provides state security actors with additional capacities while staving off controversy. My focus on the political agency required in the assembling of a modular security toolbox is an attempt to bring forward the political dimension of (security) assemblages – to confront those who seek to de-politicize controversial security policies, and the differential (re)production of substantive citizenship that these entail. I have charted one possible path of exploring state security actors' assembling of a modular toolbox, and the possibilities for negotiation and resistance, from the enlistment of additional public and private actors, to that of material, technological and affective modules.

There are, of course, other ways that the assembling of a modular security toolbox could be researched. Some scholars (such as Schouten 2014) draw on assemblage approaches to explore in more detail the agency of non-human actants, such as materialities and technologies, observing their circulation and usage before assigning agency to their emergence and its subsequent implications. While attending to the role of non-human entities, this has not been my main emphasis. Taking such an approach, my research data could have led me to follow more specifically the plethora of security materialities and infrastructures found in Jerusalem: security cameras, police weaponry on trial, the separation wall, ID papers, or even the water supply network. Such an approach could have been highly productive in examining how physical objects circulate and gain meaning, and

how they mediate the relations between security actors and citizens. Such an approach might locate the material origins and the end destinations of these entities, following them as they are discarded or sold as a security export, connecting them to transnational chains of supply, extraction and policy transfer. Yet such an approach might also be less apt at demonstrating the division of human labor between pluralized and privatized security actors – to explore who precisely does what, where, under which guise and to what end, questions I considered a priority as I conducted this research. Obviously, these different approaches need not be mutually exclusive; there is an ample scope for future research in this regard.

Another pathway in exploring the phenomena I have analyzed here could be to eschew the assemblage approach altogether, in favor of a more traditional ethnographic account of the lived experience of Jerusalem in the shadow of the pervasive presence of security agents. During my fieldwork in Jerusalem I collected a wide array of stories, experiences and perspectives that ultimately fell outside of the scope of this dissertation. These could form the basis for another kind of work, one that highlights how different residents – and also security agents – experience the transformed security landscape in Jerusalem. Some of these more traditionally ethnographic perspectives found their way to the different sections of this dissertation, particularly in Chapters 5 and 6; future research could explore and contrast in greater detail the everyday lived experience of security by those who are afforded enhanced protection (such as Jewish-Israeli settlers), by those designated as security threats, and by those who are tasked with providing security as part of their work or civil duty.

TOWARDS A FUTURE OF (IN)SECURITY

The tumultuous and violent summer of 2014 came and went in Jerusalem. Palestinian residents of the city were confronted by a wide range of public and private security agents, and witnessed the extent to which the Israeli authorities would go in pacifying Palestinian opposition to Israeli rule. As with other outbursts of violence, the city soon returned to 'normalcy', a condition marked by quotidian violent practices of exclusion rather than large-scale attacks and incursions.

That superficial calm soon proved merely a temporary condition. The lack of a political solution on the horizon, the continuous expropriation of Palestinians' land and houses, the construction of Jewish-Israeli settlements, and Palestinians' perceptions of a threat posed by Israeli security actors and Jewish zealots to the al-Aqsa mosque led to a new outburst of violence in September 2015. In the months that followed, dozens of Israelis and hundreds of Palestinians were killed in Jerusalem and throughout Israel/Palestine. Individual Palestinians carried out stabbing, shooting and car-ramming attacks, while Israeli forces attacked both Palestinian assailants and civilians, including during armed incursions into the Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem. When I returned to Jerusalem for my second fieldwork stay in late 2016, my Palestinian interlocutors described how their neighborhoods had been placed under siege for days on end; Jewish-Israeli residents and security agents described to me their experience of long months dominated by constant fear. The Israeli authorities were once again forced to face their inability to maintain the current status-quo, or to restore a long-lasting calm to the city's streets.

In the summer of 2017, Israeli plans for reinforced surveillance at the entry points to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, the site of the al-Aqsa

mosque, led to large-scale Palestinian civil resistance, which resulted in an Israeli backtracking and a rare victory for the embattled Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. However, the Palestinian euphoria did not last long: the decision by the US administration in early 2018 to break with international conventions and recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel made the prospects for a political solution in Jerusalem seem more distant than ever.

In this dissertation, I have not sought to propose a specific resolution to Jerusalem's woes, let alone a solution to the political predicament of Israel/Palestine. I can, however, offer a clear statement on what a political resolution will *not* look like. It will not be achieved within the scope of the law alone. A legal reading of Israeli security provision is incapable of capturing the extent and reach of security policies – and, conversely, legal solutions alone cannot guarantee equality, safety or liberty to Palestinians and Israelis. My analysis of the Israeli assembling of a modular security toolbox has highlighted the flexibility and adaptability of Israeli security actors, who have proved able to overcome limited, constrained legal and operational capacities through security pluralization and privatization. Wide sections of the Israeli state apparatus, aided by commercial security enterprises, have been enlisted to advance a controversial security provision. Any proposition for a political resolution in Jerusalem with the pretense of being more than a cosmetic solution, will need to focus on the condition that perpetuates insecurity: the vast inequality in the allocation of rights, resources and political decision-making between Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians living under Israeli rule.

In this dissertation I have delved into the assembling of an Israeli security toolbox and its serious political consequences in terms of the distribution of rights, resources and political decision-making. The pluralization and privatization of security provision has not reinforced the reach of Israeli state security actors, but also embroiled nominally 'neutral' administrative

and regulatory state institutions in a discriminatory logic of protection (Huysmans 2006). The emergence of public-private security assemblages thus marks a wider move towards the de-responsibilization of the state towards *some* of its citizens, under the guise of security – a shift in which both state security actors, and the pluralized and privatized security modules they assembled together, embody state policies of differentiation, discrimination and dispossession.

I want to conclude with a proposition on the implications of my research for political and intellectual modes of critiquing the occupation of Jerusalem, and other situations in which a modular security toolbox is being deployed. I suggest that in order to fully understand contemporary state security policies or practices, and their differential consequences for citizens, researching and critiquing the police, the military, border agencies or the criminal justice system is not enough. The security landscape is increasingly populated by other public and private actors, materialities and technologies, who are enlisted and instructed by state security actors to effectuate controversial security policies. With the advent of new technologies of data-collection, automation, prediction and prevention entering the governance of everyday life, security pluralization and privatization pose risks more acute than ever. We – researchers, concerned citizens – need to keep an eye on these dynamics, stay alert to their harmful implications, and propose alternatives to the limited reading of security, threats and citizenship contained therein.