The Modular Security Toolbox: Assembling State and Citizenship in Jerusalem
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Summary

In this doctoral dissertation I explore how, and to what end, do state security actors pursue security pluralization and privatization in Jerusalem – and subsequently – what are the implications of these processes for the (re)production of differentiated citizenship and its negotiation in Jerusalem. In light of the discussions on the neoliberal (re)assembly of the state (Sassen 2006, Ong 2006), scholarship attended widely to the entanglements of state security actors with a wider ‘policing family’ (Crawford 2013), and to lesser degree to the unequal implications of these entanglements on different citizens. In this dissertation I go beyond the existing discussion on the transformed security landscape and its implications to different citizens. I argue that the differential allocation of rights, resources and political decision-making is not merely a by-product of security privatization and pluralization, but can actually be its desired goal. I seek to capture these interactivities by attending to the (re)production of substantive citizenship, a distinction marked not by formal belonging to a state, but instead dependent upon the provision of rights, resources and political decision-making as part of an incorporated political, civil or social community (Holston 2008, Gordon and Stack 2007).

In this dissertation I employ an assemblage approach (Delanda 2006a, Ryan 2014), which highlights the relations – hierarchical, reciprocal and rhizomatic – emerging and dissolving between different actors and actants in an ever-changing assemblage. I follow Li’s (2007) suggestion that assemblages never emerge out of thin air, but instead someone, or something, is needed to bring the diverse elements together and produce the relations between them. My focus is thus on the act of assembly - on who assembles the diverse security actors, materialities and technologies, and how they do so, to what end, and with which implications. Through my findings I bring forth the conceptualization of a modular security toolbox: of how state security actors enlist and instruct additional private and public actors, technologies and materialities outside the spectrum of the police, the military and the criminal justice system, aiming to enhance their capacity to pursue controversial security policies that they would be unable, or unwilling, to pursue otherwise.

My intent in this dissertation is to advance knowledge on the parallel processes of security privatization and security pluralization, by analyzing the governance logic articulated in their emergence, and the implications they have on different residents of the city. This dissertation pivots around Jerusalem: a holy city, a site of worship and devotion, but also of violence and occupation; a city that captivated a major part of humanity throughout millennia. Jerusalem, where the 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 interactivities at the core of this research. Considering this, I discuss the historical and political developments in Jerusalem in Chapter 2, ‘Researching Jerusalem’. I then continue to explore the methodological tools used in this research. Data for this research were collected through 11-months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in
Jerusalem, which included extensive participant observation at sites of encounter between different residents and Israeli security agents. Furthermore, I conducted 92 semi-structured interviews with different residents of Jerusalem, with security agents, activists, legal advocates and policymakers. I conclude Chapter 2 by discussing the scope and limitations of my methodology – and extending on the ethical dilemmas I faced in the duration of this research.

In the four empirical chapters of this dissertation I approach the Israeli modular security toolbox from different angles. Each chapter makes its own contribution to the discussion on the assembling of a modular security toolbox, its differential (re)production of substantive citizenship, and how it can be negotiated by citizens. While every chapter delves into different cases in different spaces, together my findings suggest an answer to the questions I pose: the how and why of the security pluralization and privatization, and the outline of the differential implications of these processes to different residents of the city.

Chapter 3, ‘Governance through Pluralization’, is where I foreground my theoretical intervention, in which I conceptualize modular security as a mode of governance. The chapter takes stock of the emergence of a modular governance logic in security provision, by exploring how urban security is increasingly diffused into differing modules - security actors, performances, technologies and materialities. I focus on security pluralization in Jerusalem - where security roles are delegated to administrative and regulatory state bodies. In the course of this chapter I identify four features of urban modular security provisions: the heterogeneity of its public and private components, the development of reserved capacities, the differential multifacetedness of its performances and practices towards residents and the ubiquity of informal knowledge and information transfers between different actors. This chapter's findings highlight how the modular assembling of security actors complements and replaces traditional policing institutions with other informal disciplinary, punitive, statecrafting and dispossessioning powers, in a manner which unequally distributes rights and resources to different residents of the city.

My exploration of the assembling of a modular security toolbox was further extended in Chapter 4, ‘Crafting and Reinforcing the State through Security Privatization’, by a detailed discussion on how and why state authorities pursue security privatization. In this chapter I explore the emergence of a public-private security assemblage at Jewish-Israeli settlement compounds in East Jerusalem, where the provision of security has been outsourced to private security companies. My findings illustrate how the privatization of security provision can reinforce, rather than erode the state, by contributing to state actors’ capacity to pursue the territorialization of areas beyond the full grasp of the state. I posit that state authority and responsibility can be diffused into multiple nodes of private authority in the operation, performance, and supervision of security and violence – while keeping the state monopoly over legitimate violence intact. I suggest that such relations can be in the interest of state security actors, seeing as they are able to differentially distribute (in)security by
outsourcing security provision and evade accountability as well as deflect public and legal challenges to controversial state-led projects.

Next, I proceed to delve into the differential implications of security pluralization and privatization, by analysing the Israeli material, affective and temporal security interventions at checkpoints in and around Jerusalem, through the lens of (un)certainty. My findings in Chapter 5, ‘Outsourced Security and the Politics of Uncertainty’, suggest that (un)certainty can be employed as a mode of governance. I propose that uncertainty can be strategically employed and adjusted by means of irregular operation, managerial obfuscation, lack of accountability as well as contradictory or oft-altered directives and regulatory framework by public and private security actors. I explore each of these by observing how Israeli security actors enlist a plurality of actors, technologies and materialities to differentially produce (un)certainty at checkpoints, facilitating the mobility of some residents while impeding the movement of others. I conclude this chapter by suggesting that the prospect of residents’ entrance and exit from the city, as well as the reliability and predictability of their movement, create different patterns of (im)mobility, economic dependency, and social and political fragmentation.

In Chapter 6, ‘Negotiating Citizenship and Countering Jerusalem’s Residency Revocation Policy’, I examine the home as a site of citizenship (re)production, while discussing the different manners in which residents negotiate security pluralization and privatization. Israel is pursuing a policy of revoking Palestinian Jerusalemites’ residency permits through a plurality of public and private modules, enlisted as part of the Israeli security toolbox. In response, Palestinian residents assemble their own modular toolbox, intended to negotiate and resist the Israeli attempts to exclude them from their own city. I posit that Palestinian Jerusalemites do so through a citizenship enactment (Isin and Nielsen 2013) in which they perform an eligible version of their Jerusalem home. I explore this performance through the distinct dimensions of socio-material practices, the mobilization of social relations and the procurement of bureaucratic documentation. My findings highlight the highly political nature of domestic space, where citizenship can be performed in order to maintain limited rights, resources and mobility in the face of urban exclusion and demographic engineering.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes this dissertation. In the conclusion I juxtapose my findings from the empirical chapters and point out their significance for concurrent debates on privatized and pluralized security provision, on citizenship, and on the political, spatial and social developments in Jerusalem. Theoretically, I propose that the (re)configuration of the security landscape through pluralization and privatization precipitates a 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. This differential (re)production of substantive citizenship is not only a coincidental outcome of the emergence of a modular security toolbox, but can actually be its
desired goal: the assembling of security enables state actors to pursue controversial policies while evading accountability and averting legal and political pressure. I proceed to suggest possible further research trajectories, which could extend the scope of this dissertation. Lastly, I highlight how the implications of this dissertation’s findings extend far beyond Jerusalem, to other diverse cases where the emergence of new state-led security configurations contributes to the differential (re)production of substantive citizenship. I conclude that our understanding of the social, political and economic ramifications of security provision would be incomplete without adequate attention to the assembling of security, considering how (in)security grows to encompass an ever-growing domain, replacing the nominal equality of urban and national citizenship with a differentiation based upon the perception of risk and threat.