



Book Review

Bajc, Vida and Willem de Lint (eds). 2011. Security and Everyday Life. New York: Routledge
312pp. Hardback, \$113.33, ISBN: 978-0415997683

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Done right, edited volumes can provide great service to a particular topic, giving a window into understanding the frames of reference and topical matters of concern held by a community of scholars. Be it a well established topic, or, as in this case, an emerging and synthetic area of inquiry, edited volumes are more than a collection of discrete articles, constituting instead a domain of intellectual discourse sustained by meta-theoretical assumptions, conceptual frameworks, and methodologies. Hence, the challenge of any volume is to demonstrate internal coherence while also providing external validity.

In this particular case, Bajc and de Lint do not shy away from these challenges, and in fact press for the need to address the metatheoretical complexities of framing security and everyday life. Bajc and de Lint advocate for the need to address the underlying order of things behind the logic of global securitization, and in turn how such logic frames the social construction of threat and exception within everyday life practices and discourses. This is particularly important because, as they see it, security has become the most dominant organizing principle of social life: a security meta-frame (drawing from Gregory Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, and *Mind and Nature*), sustained through routine practices of surveillance, the restriction of mobility to particular groups, techniques of profiling and pre-emptive action, and with it a genealogy of sovereign power and authority rooted in the state's capacity to exercise itself over its territory and population. The meta-frame is grounded in exclusionary thinking: a binary of chaos or order requiring an entire regime for the routine monitoring and classification of peoples where security trumps all other concerns. The goal for state power is thus to ensure that the message of security is transmitted to the everyday lives of the population with little or no ambiguity. The volume therefore investigates this.

The volume's ten chapters are broken down into four parts, each of which provides an empirical and conceptual development of the meta-framework of security in everyday life contexts. The first section details how institutions of security envision social reality in public places, including an analysis of the social taboo of joking about security at the airport, as well as a chapter on the performance and spectacle of security during a visit from the pope. The second section focuses on how securitization is increasingly generating new social struggles, conflicts and practices of resistance, and tells the story first of an Israeli woman who questioned and ultimately resisted the security frame of the Israeli state. The second chapter details resistance to the increasing securitization of the U.S.-Mexico border. The third section focuses on the relationship between state authority and the ordering of social life through institutions of law, social exclusion, and citizenship. This features a conceptual chapter on security modulation, followed by a second chapter which explores the concept of exceptionalism by examining the lawless treatment of Arabs and Muslims by the Canadian government. The final chapter explores and problematizes how the "War on Terror" has enabled a socio-political shift in the discourses and practices of security, resulting in a future-

centric calculus of risk management. The fourth and final section examines how global transformations in security are played out at the local level, and how institutions of power and authority perform the security meta-frame in an attempt to homogenize social conflict through the targeting and ordering of particular social groups or practices deemed to be of risk to the state, and explores this within three geographic locales: Europe, China, and Latin America.

As a whole, the volume is qualitative in its epistemological focus, and covers a wide range of geographic and social contexts, through a careful dissection of the most salient concepts within security studies. Overall, the volume is directed primarily at the structural changes in governmentality which have come about through the development of the security meta-frame; it thus tends to focus on the relationship between the lived experience and the lived politics, or how it is that wholesale neoliberalization of the global economy has wrought changes to how populations are targeted and managed by the security apparatus. In the conclusion, de Lint hints that security has itself become a type of spectacle, the result of the “faulty unity of its particular suturing of economy and society” (p.259).

While the volume is very strong in its unpacking and problematization of the security meta-frame, more could have been done to clarify the importance of “everyday life” as a theoretical concept. For example, absent from the volume is a discussion of how the spectacle of security has manifested in the private or domestic spheres. Ontological approaches to everyday life drawn from theorists such as Lefebvre, Bourdieu and de Certeau could have been incorporated in order to explore how security itself is becoming increasingly appropriated and commodified by practices of consumption, or more broadly the institutions of consumer culture (cf. Loader, 1999). Instead, the notion of everyday life seems to be used informally as a way of problematizing the practices of exceptionalism within the routine ordering of social life. This gap, however, is not necessarily a problem. Bajc and de Lint are interested with providing a preliminary agenda for future directions in security studies, rather than seeking to hypostatize everyday life as a paradigm. If anything, Bajc and de Lint's volume indeed demonstrates the sheer potential for future scholarship in this broad, inclusive area of inquiry.

Readers of *Surveillance & Society* will find this volume useful for its rich and descriptive accounts of how particular groups have been subject to the social forces of securitization and surveillance, as well as the performance of security across different geographic and cultural contexts. There is a deep commitment throughout the chapters to problematizing the security meta-frame by providing accounts of how the emerging logic of security is wrought with struggle and resistance. Indeed, there are some powerful stories to be told here. Overall, this volume offers a valuable and timely insight into the uneven distribution of power and domination currently unfolding within global security narratives, and how securitization is experienced both from a structural as well as phenomenological account of everyday life. Readers seeking an account which tries to balance a conceptual development of security meta-narratives with stories of difference and exception will find this volume an insightful contribution to this burgeoning domain of security studies.

References

Loader, Ian. 1999. Consumer Culture and the Commodification of Policing and Security. *Sociology* 33(2): 373-392.