

Towards an embodied securityscape

Noxolo, Patricia

DOI:

[10.1080/14649365.2014.882397](https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2014.882397)

Document Version

Early version, also known as pre-print

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Noxolo, P 2014, 'Towards an embodied securityscape: Brian Chikwava's Harare North and the asylum seeking body as site of articulation', *Social and Cultural Geography*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 291-312.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2014.882397>

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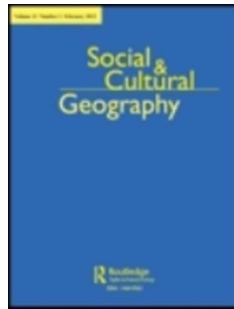
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Securityscapes and asylum: in/secure bodies doing and being

Journal:	<i>Social and Cultural Geography</i>
Manuscript ID:	Draft
Manuscript Type:	Original Paper
Keywords:	securityscapes, asylum, security, bodies, taskscape, harare north
Abstract:	<p>This paper seeks to articulate and challenge a series of nexuses that have developed around (in)security and the flows of human beings between the global South and the global North. Over the last decade, many writers have noted what has been labelled the securitization of asylum and immigration in the UK and in Europe, as well as the US and Australia, in which a range of political actors link migration and security discursively. At the same time, many other writers have observed a security-development nexus, in which international development aid has become securitized (i.e. re-focused on security allies and on post-conflict reconstruction); in which underdevelopment is re-fashioned as insecurity. The figure of the asylum seeker bridges and transgresses both of these arenas of securitization, pushing towards a heightened awareness of a global 'securityscape' that crosses both disciplinary and spatial boundaries. Drawing on key theoretical contributions around the concept of the 'scape', as well as a range of studies of securitisation as the merging of professional fields and as various forms of subaltern or resistant securitisation, the securityscape is elaborated in relation to modes of seeing, doing and being, with the latter illustrated through a critical reading of Brian Chikwava's recent novel about a Zimbabwean asylum seeker in London, 'Harare North'.</p>

Securityscapes and asylum: in/secure bodies doing and being

Introduction: Two nexuses

Since the turn of the 21st century, many writers (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006; Waever, 1995) have noted what has been labelled the securitization of asylum and immigration in the UK and in Europe, as well as the US and Australia. Most pervasively, a range of political actors link asylum and security rhetorically. This need not be a firm or thorough connection. Indeed the word nexus is used to emphasize imprecision and indeterminability: "*a nexus can be understood as a network of connections between disparate ideas, processes or objects; alluding to a nexus implies an infinite number of possible linkages and relations*" (Stern and Ojendal, 2010, p. 11, emphasis in original).

In the UK, as was particularly noticeable in debates around identity cards, the security-asylum nexus takes the form of adding asylum seekers and other migrants into a disparate list of security concerns, without necessarily making explicit how each of the items is a particular threat or is necessarily linked to the others in the list (Huysmans and Buonfino, 2005). Many have noted that, in the tabloid press, this rhetorical link between asylum seekers and criminality happens in careless phrases such as 'bogus asylum seeker' or 'illegal asylum seeker' (or in the implicit contrast to 'genuine asylum seeker'). It also happens through selectivity, with front-page exposure of any criminal acts by asylum seekers (Noxolo, 2009a), particularly in relation to terrorism, even (as in the ricin case¹) where accusations turn out to be unfounded.

¹ In 2003 Scotland Yard issued a statement that a dangerous toxin, ricin, had been found in a London flat where a number of asylum seekers lived and was potentially linked to a terrorist plot, but the allegation was

1
2
3 The other nexus that has been noted is between security and development. As with
4
5 security-migration, this is not always an explicit or clear linkage between the two, but
6
7 is often a shifting and inchoate set of juxtapositions and shared framings (Duffield,
8
9 2010; Stern and Ojendal, 2010). Amongst these diverse entanglements it is possible
10
11 to identify three broad strands. Again, commentators have most often noted a range
12
13 of discursive moves, in that underdevelopment or poverty become re-fashioned
14
15 repeatedly, in development reports and media statements, as insecurity , for
16
17 example with states that are not fully integrated into the global system represented
18
19 as dangerous areas in which terrorists are generated (Abrahamsen, 2004; Barnett,
20
21 2005; Tujan, Gaughran and Mollett, 2004). Development interventions therefore
22
23 become justified not only in terms of eliminating poverty and inequality, but in terms
24
25 of the dangers of global interconnectedness in a highly unequal world.
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29
30 This paper begins from the starting point that the asylum seeker crosses the
31
32 boundaries between these two nexuses, fleeing insecurity often in development
33
34 arenas, and becoming constructed as a security threat in countries where s/he seeks
35
36 asylum. Yet these two nexuses are rarely summoned together, drawing on two
37
38 separate bodies of literature (critical security and geopolitics) which rarely
39
40 communicate one with another, even when they are both talking about asylum
41
42 seekers (Amoore, 2006; Aradau, 2004). The concept of the securityscape is a way of
43
44 beginning to insist more on the spatial and temporal connections between the
45
46 different arenas of securitization that the figure of the asylum seeker brings together
47
48 and transgresses. As such it calls for dialogue between critical geopolitics (Duffield,
49
50 2007; Gregory, 2011; Hettne, 2010), and the securitization of immigration literature
51
52 (Abrahamsen, 2004; Ibrahim, 2005; Noxolo and Huysmans, 2009), which can be
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57 later proved to be false Osborne, P., 2006. *The Use and Abuse of Terror: The construction of a false narrative on*
58 *the domestic terror threat*. Centre for Policy Studies, London.
59
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1
2
3 placed within critical security studies. Drawing on broadly Foucauldian discursive
4
5 approaches, both of these literatures view security not as an objective or static
6
7 outcome of governmental or professional assessment of threatening conditions, nor
8
9 indeed is it confined to the juridical negotiation between government and civil
10
11 society, on the boundaries between security and liberty. Beyond the 'speech acts' of
12
13 politicians (Waeber, 1995), securitization is negotiated through the everyday
14
15 interactions of a wide range of actors, including community groups (Hughes, 2009),
16
17 media and NGOs (Noxolo, 2009c, d), and security personnel (Bigo, 2002).

20
21 Securitization is a social, cultural and political process in which a range of actors
22
23 contribute to the shifting and fuzziness of the borderline between security and
24
25 insecurity (Huysmans, 2000).

28
29 The concept of the securityscape developed in this paper seeks to combine this
30
31 sense of securitisation as negotiation and process, with the thoroughly spatial
32
33 concept of the 'scape'. The concept of landscape has been closely associated with
34
35 modes of seeing in geography both in terms of the representation of landscape in the
36
37 visual and textual arts (Barnes and Duncan, 1992; Smith, 1993), and in terms of
38
39 visible features of the land (Carney and Voeks, 2003; Wylie, 2006), but this paper
40
41 will argue that the border-crossing figure of the asylum seeker both necessitates and
42
43 illustrates more heavily embodied aspects of a transnational securityscape, focusing
44
45 less on representation, and more on practice and identity, i.e. the securityscape
46
47 encompasses not only securitisation as a way of seeing, but also as a way of being
48
49 and doing. In the next section, this article will draw on Arjun Appadurai's (1996)
50
51 deployment of the concept of a series of transnational 'scapes', as well as on Tim
52
53 Ingold's (2000) concept of the 'taskscape' to theorise securitisation as a series of
54
55 practices that link with more intimate, embodied modes of being. The third and
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1
2
3 fourth sections will demonstrate the embodied nature of the securityscape, with the
4
5 third section offering a number of examples from existing research around asylum
6
7 seekers, development and insecurity, and the fourth section offering a brief
8
9 illustrative reading of Brian Chikwava's (2010) novel 'Harare North'. The article will
10
11 conclude with some broad implications of this insistence on an embodied
12
13 securityscape in relation to the politics of identity as it surrounds asylum seekers.
14
15

16 17 **Towards the securityscape: from seeing bodies to embodied doing and being** 18

19
20 Much recent geographical literature on insecurity has noted that the surveillance of
21
22 bodies as they cross borders is changing (Amoore, 2006; Yuval-Davis, Anthias and
23
24 Kofman, 2005). Many have noted that the opening of global borders for
25
26 economically productive activities such as business or tourism, creating a frictionless
27
28 'space of flows' (Castells, 2000) for some, is shadowed by the simultaneous
29
30 intensification of surveillance of the border crossings of those seen as security
31
32 threats (Huysmans, 2006) – the panopticon of surveillance of productive free
33
34 movement becomes the 'banopticon' of surveillance to restrict movement of
35
36 undesirables (Bigo, 2007). Asylum seekers are among the groups whose border
37
38 crossings have become increasingly subjected to surveillance, with extended periods
39
40 of detention and investigation, and a range of technologies for interrogating and
41
42 establishing their right to asylum. There is increasing pressure on those seeking
43
44 asylum both to narrate the insecurities from which they are fleeing in credible ways
45
46 (Farrier, 2012), and to present themselves as not posing a threat to the security of
47
48 their countries of refuge (Fekete, 2005).
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53
54 One notable aspect of this increased surveillance, not only at international borders
55
56 but also at checkpoints and internal borders in securitised zones such as post-
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1
2
3 conflict arenas (Hyndman and De Alwis, 2004), is its intense focus on bodies:
4
5 beyond the increased use of visual technologies (cameras, passports, identity
6
7 cards), the introduction of increasingly sophisticated biometrics means that the focus
8
9 of security is moving from external to internal corporealities (Adey, 2009), from a
10
11 focus just on how bodies look, to a focus on how bodies move, act and feel. This is
12
13 of course not a definitive shift. As Fluri (2010) and Mountz (2004) have noted, the
14
15 visual differences between bodies (gendered and racial difference for example) are
16
17 still an important part of the differential circulation of bodies in securitised spaces,
18
19 even though these visual differences are always unstable and intersect in complex
20
21 ways with a range of sharply salient identity markers – between enemy and ally,
22
23 between us and them - in specific conflict situations (Hyndman and De Alwis, 2004).
24
25 However, the deployment of increasingly sensitive biometric technologies means
26
27 that aspects of affect – “microscopic particles and traces... physiological indicators,
28
29 and micro-expressive gesticulations” (Adey, 2009, 275) – are measured in the body
30
31 to assess present moods and intentions in order to predict and pre-empt future
32
33 terrorist or other disruptive actions. Therefore not only the look, but also the micro-
34
35 gestures, sensitivities and micro-changes of the bodies of asylum seekers – their
36
37 “corporeal choreographies” (Puumala and Pehkonen, 2010) – figure within a
38
39 securityscape that is becoming increasingly heavily embodied.
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46 The concept of the heavily embodied securityscape fleshes out Arjun Appadurai’s
47
48 (1996) famous formulation of the space of flows, in which he recognises five ‘scapes’
49
50 that are negotiated as people form identities in a globalised world. These scapes are
51
52 cross-border flows of images, cultures, beliefs, technologies and money, that he
53
54 terms respectively mediascape, ethnoscape, ideoscape, technoscape and
55
56 financescape. Each of these flows takes place across territorial boundaries,
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1
2
3 challenging the primacy of settlement in the formation of identity. This article
4
5 proposes to add the securityscape to these scapes, taking on board the cross-border
6
7 negotiation of identity that is central to Appadurai's scapes, but also maintaining the
8
9 focus on corporeality that I have argued above is becoming increasingly central to
10
11 securitisation.
12

13
14 There is a productive tension in Appadurai's work between flow and disjuncture that
15
16 is worth highlighting here. Despite criticisms accusing Appadurai of smoothing out
17
18 spatialised inequalities in a premature celebration of undifferentiated flow (Ong,
19
20 1999), Appadurai is here pointing to difference and disjuncture alongside and as a
21
22 consequence of mobility: this is not a world in which everyone and everything
23
24 moves, nor do bodies and concepts move in the same way, by the same routes and
25
26 with the same consequences (Massey, 1993). By the same token, although it is true
27
28 to say that Appadurai's view of space is rather flat, with flows merely passing over
29
30 space rather than actively contributing to its re-territorialisation (Heyman and
31
32 Campbell, 2009; Sparke, 2005), Appadurai's scapes are not disembodied. Instead,
33
34 trans-border identity and difference become defined through everyday embodied
35
36 negotiation and contestation across borders, including through the security
37
38 technologies and rituals that occur at borders every day (Amoore and Hall, 2010), as
39
40 well as in the insecure spaces that asylum seekers regularly flee (Fluri, 2010;
41
42 Hyndman and De Alwis, 2004), and in the processing and detention centres in which
43
44 asylum seekers often wait (Gill, 2009; Malloch and Stanley, 2005).
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50
51 A further implication of Appadurai's scapes for the concept of a securityscape is that
52
53 the scapes interact without sharing a centre, so that security is understood as a set
54
55 of ideas, images, people, technologies and finance that flows across borders, in and
56
57 through bodies and embodied practices. This can be briefly illustrated in relation to
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1
2
3 Noxolo's (2009c) analysis of how, in the immediate aftermath of the 2005 London
4 bombings, UK non-governmental organisations (NGOs) engaged in a scalar politics
5 in responding to the repeated representation of asylum seekers as a security threat.
6
7 Noxolo argued that UK NGOs networked with other NGOs at the national scale to
8 make the most of scarce resources by maintaining a high profile for critiques of the
9 asylum/security nexus, but also drew on information about relevant and rapidly
10 changing directives and initiatives cascading down through a range of formal and
11 informal networks with NGOs at the EU and global scales. To re-read this in terms
12 of the securityscape involves a different set of questions about how security
13 discourses were actively embodied (interpreted, compared, negotiated and
14 supplemented) by NGOs, not simply in terms of cascading down hierarchies of
15 scale, but also in terms of trans-border mobilities of personnel, images, ideas,
16 technologies and finance. For example, in the relationships between the
17 securityscape and the mediascape, many have noted the importance of media in the
18 formation of security discourses in a range of locations (Ingram and Dodds, 2009;
19 Louw, 2003; Noxolo, 2009d; Sharp, 2011), whilst others (for example Bach and
20 Stark, 2004) have noted the importance of NGOs as globalised information brokers
21 in an increasingly media-saturated world. What roles might changes in the global
22 mediascape play in creating a context in which images of asylum seekers' bodies in
23 relation to security are more likely to be discussed by NGOs at regional and global
24 conferences, are more likely to be selected and represented in advocacy agendas,
25 and are more likely to be deployed in meeting NGOs' operational need to use media
26 to maintain public understanding of their own legitimacy (Howell and Lind, 2009;
27 Lister, 2003)? Some of these questions of the politics of the securityscape will be
28 discussed in more detail in the conclusion of this article.
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3 The body of the asylum seeker, then, inhabits a securityscape that is constructed
4
5 through the embodied negotiation of identity and difference: the focus is therefore on
6
7 this negotiating body, in terms of its securitising practices and in terms of its modes
8
9 of being within in/secure spaces. Tim Ingold (2000) has famously extended the
10
11 concept of landscape from that which humans survey, with its implication of
12
13 human/nonhuman separation, to that within which humans 'dwell' (but see also
14
15 Wylie, 2006, p. 521). Dwelling emphasises the materiality of human bodies, as they
16
17 work and live within a landscape, interacting with the material objects and
18
19 environments surrounding them. This is a profound and productive interaction, in
20
21 which both human and non-human matter is changed. For this reason Ingold (2000,
22
23 p. 198) emphasises the work that human beings do within landscape, coining the
24
25 term 'taskscape' to emphasise the active relationships between people and between
26
27 people and landscape. The taskscape pushes the concept of the scape to focus on
28
29 embodied practice, examples of which will be explored in the next section.
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31
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34
35 At the same time a focus on the body pushes doing into being in a substantial sense
36
37 – the body gives substance to existence. Tim Ingold (2007: 7) has called for a
38
39 greater focus on substance or materials themselves, rather than on materiality as a
40
41 philosophical construct. He argues that a focus on materiality as an abstract concept
42
43 can reinforce a divide between mind and matter, in which human beings only
44
45 encounter objects via culture. Instead the focus should be on bodies as matter
46
47 interacting with objects as matter:
48
49

50
51 Like all other creatures, human beings do not exist on the 'other side' of
52
53 materiality but swim in an ocean of materials. Once we acknowledge our
54
55 immersion, what this ocean reveals to us is not the bland homogeneity of
56
57 different shades of matter but a flux in which materials of the most diverse kinds
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3 – through processes of admixture and distillation, of coagulation and dispersal,
4
5 and of evaporation and precipitation – undergo continual generation and
6
7 transformation.
8
9

10 Noxolo and Prezioso (2012) take this dynamic interactivity to the quantum scale.

11
12 Drawing on the work of Judith Butler (1993) and Karen Barad (2007) they argue that
13
14 matter, including the body, can be thought of as itself dynamic, as *processes* of
15
16 materialization rather than as fixed substance. In the context of the securityscape,
17
18 this dynamism of the body as matter pushes towards an understanding of insecurity
19
20 as practised in more intimate, affective arenas, between but also within bodies. So
21
22 how do bodies practise insecurity?
23
24

25
26 It is of course difficult to give a conclusive answer to such a question, because
27
28 bodies are diverse (Saldanha, 2006; Tolia-Kelly, 2006), but also because the way
29
30 that the body speaks to us, though insistent and hard to ignore, can be indeterminate
31
32 and hard to understand (Noxolo, 2009b; Pile, 2006). On the level of the skin, Sara
33
34 Ahmed (2000) has for example explored the importance of touch for a feeling of
35
36 security, and of pain for insecurity, whilst Ingold (2000: 204) mentions the forms of
37
38 “muscular consciousness” that are developed in relationships with landscapes, an
39
40 example of which might be when the body tenses up in an insecure environment.
41
42
43 Frantz Fanon (1967: 41) - in a passage that Seshardi-Crooks (2002) links specifically
44
45 with masculine bodies – describes the relationship between coloniser and colonised
46
47 as filled with intense insecurity, with the colonised always primed for anti-colonial
48
49 violence, so that: “That impulse to take the settler’s place implies a tonicity of
50
51 muscles the whole time...” This muscular tension is itself generative of insecurity, in
52
53 that some of the “collective autodestruction” (Fanon, 1967: 42) of inter-communal
54
55 violence can, Fanon argues, be attributed to the desperate need for muscular
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3 release in the face of this sustained insecurity. Similarly a well-known trope in
4
5 women's postcolonial fiction is for characters to suffer psychic disintegration in the
6
7 context of the racialised frustration or curtailment of their aspirations (O'Callaghan,
8
9 1993; Rhys, 1992), and this is often accompanied by physical manifestations or
10
11 effects, for example phantom pregnancy (Brodber, 1988) or miscarriage (Edgell,
12
13 1982; Noxolo, Raghuram and Madge, 2008). This apparent gendering of bodily
14
15 impulses is of course not a necessary or absolute distinction, particularly at the level
16
17 of muscular consciousness (Hyndman and De Alwis, 2004), though of course
18
19 racialised and gendered difference can be important markers of difference in
20
21 situations of insecurity (Fluri, 2011) and might themselves lead to differential bodily
22
23 affects (Saldanha, 2006; Tolia-Kelly, 2006).
24
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26

27
28 Methodologically, recognition of the importance of intimate corporeal processes
29
30 requires creative forms of research. Davies and Dwyer (2007: 259) have noted that
31
32 geographers' strategies in exploring such "unspeakable geographies" have been not
33
34 to change their research methods necessarily, but to change their interpretive
35
36 strategies. This might take the form of, for example, using "more performative
37
38 strategies for making sense of interview data" (Davies and Dwyer, 2007: 259), such
39
40 as narrative analysis, and shifting the focus "away from looking at depth (in the
41
42 sense of a single unified truth)... towards detail (in the sense of a fuller and more
43
44 variegated picture of the interviewee)" (Latham, 2003), as Liz Bondi (Bondi, this
45
46 volume) demonstrates in her use of auto-ethnography to explore ontological
47
48 insecurity. This move towards performative interpretation of form, rather than
49
50 digging for factual content, opens up the possibility of engaging with literary
51
52 representations in research. Though there is neither space nor intention here to give
53
54 a review of literary geography (but see Noxolo and Preziuso, 2013; Saunders, 2009),
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1
2
3 the sub-discipline is an arena in which there is an established interpretive tradition of
4
5 considering textual form and content as explicitly interacting in the production of
6
7 meaning (Hones, 2008). The fourth section of this article will offer a reading of Brian
8
9 Chikwava's novel 'Harare North', which creatively explores the effects of sustained
10
11 insecurity on the embodiment of an asylum seeker in London. Before that however,
12
13 the next section will briefly explore examples from existing research of the embodied
14
15 practices that constitute the securityscape for asylum seekers.
16
17

18 19 **Embodied insecurities: practice in the securityscape**

20
21 Practice can take place at a number of scales. In relation to development and
22
23 security, many commentators (Aning, 2007; Essex, 2008) have seen an increasing
24
25 securitisation of government to government aid, where flows of development aid
26
27 have been actively re-directed towards allies in the global 'war on terror'. Others
28
29 (Noxolo, 2011; Sharp, Campbell and Laurie, 2010) have noted the increasing focus
30
31 of aid on post-conflict reconstruction and stabilisation, with security concerns said to
32
33 be restricting the flexibility and freedoms required for building the democratic and
34
35 advocacy capacity of civil society organisations (Howell and Lind, 2009). At the
36
37 scale of the professional spaces surrounding asylum, Nick Gill (2009) explores
38
39 security practices at Lunar House, the Immigration and Nationality Directorate of the
40
41 Home Office, one of only two places in the UK where asylum seekers can make in-
42
43 country asylum applications. His work shows how specific security practices (for
44
45 example the bolting down of chairs in interview rooms, and the use of protective
46
47 plastic screens) are an effect of concerns about security, but also aggravate security
48
49 concerns by heightening aggression and mistrust between applicants and staff. In
50
51 workplaces more generally, Waite et al (this volume) note how exploitation and
52
53 marginalisation of workers with insecure immigration status (for example other
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3 members of staff not talking to or interacting with them) heightens their everyday
4 sense of vulnerability and isolation. Finally, in confined public spaces, such as
5 buses and trains, where interactions with strangers tend for the most part to follow
6 conventions of polite tolerance (Wilson, 2011), asylum seekers and refugees
7 interviewed by Refugee Council (2007, p. 16) in the aftermath of the July 7th 2005
8 bombings in London, noted that the behaviour of strangers in intimate public spaces
9 had changed:
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18
19 Birmingham participant 1: I have friends who are British... some of my best
20 friends are born British, they are white people. But there are these English
21 people who do not believe that any refugee or asylum seeker is not a terrorist.
22 They see us as a terrorist.
23
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28 Birmingham participant 3: They look at you sitting next to you on the bus, and
29 they move to the next seat.
30
31

32 Others, jointly: Yes.
33
34

35
36 It is of course worth noting here that, although strangers had changed, friends had
37 not – there is in this a recognition of the possibility of kindness and friendship in
38 practice, as well as insecurity (Valentine, 2008).
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42
43 Didier Bigo's (1996) study of policing practices demonstrates how a range of shared
44 professional practices, facilitated through shared border management technologies,
45 such as biometrics, have led to overlap between the roles of police officers and
46 border management professionals across Europe. Others have also noted a parallel
47 convergence of security and asylum/immigration legislation regulating these
48 practices, most notably in 2001, when a range of anti-terrorism legislation was
49 passed across Europe, many with sharp consequences for immigrants, refugees and
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3 asylum seekers (Brouwer, 2003). This convergence of security practices with
4
5 immigration practices is all the more a matter for concern given governmental
6
7 tendencies, for example in the UK, to push border management to become more
8
9 pervasive as a practice, covering a range of professional roles. According to Bridget
10
11 Anderson (2012: 1244):
12

13
14 Government is increasingly reliant on “ordinary people” to police immigration.
15
16 Public sector workers including health workers, GPs, teachers, university
17
18 lecturers, social workers, youth workers, and employees of carriers (airline
19
20 officials, lorry drivers, etc.) have obligations to report any evidence of infractions
21
22 of control... Employer sanctions were toughened in 2004, and, in 2006, new
23
24 legislation was brought in which made it a criminal offence to knowingly employ
25
26 someone who does not have the correct immigration status, and this is
27
28 punishable with a maximum two year sentence.”
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33 Looking across the securityscape to the security-development nexus, we see similar
34
35 convergences of practice, but in very different contexts. Though devastating when
36
37 they occur, terrorism and other forms of high-profile violence are still exceptional in
38
39 Europe and North America, where most analyses of a security-migration nexus are
40
41 located. However, in too many of the arenas on which research on development-
42
43 security analyses are focused, insecurity is a part of the everyday, and is hideously,
44
45 violently, practice-based. Recent research shows that this violence is less and less
46
47 usually in the form of interstate or even civil wars - what Chris Philo memorably calls
48
49 “big-S’ Security” (Philo, 2012: 2) – which, though still disturbingly present, peaked
50
51 globally at the end of the 20th century. Increasingly violence takes chronic and
52
53 banal, rather than short term and exceptional forms: unregulated cross-border
54
55 conflicts, fall-out from organised crime, particularly illegal trades in armaments or
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3 drugs, and gang-related violence (International Bank for Reconstruction and
4 Development/World Bank, 2011).
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7
8 Two major impacts of this everyday insecurity relate to practice. First, there is an
9 increasing convergence of military and humanitarian/development roles in insecure
10 locations. Military personnel are increasingly involved in the administration of
11 humanitarian and development aid alongside humanitarian organisations (Fowler,
12 2008). In situations where NGOs are themselves at risk from violence or being
13 targeted for terrorist attacks, they have been forced to manage their own security
14 needs, including hiring security personnel (Fast, 2010). Second, there is an
15 increasing adaptation of development practice and expectations to a reality of
16 violence as unexceptional, so that development must continue in the face of
17 insecurity. For example, following a range of terrible outcomes in the 1990s,
18 including international inaction during the genocide in Rwanda, neutrality has
19 become less of a central tenet for some humanitarian organisations, with a 'new
20 humanitarianism' arguing that attempts at neutrality can prolong or deepen conflicts
21 and be an excuse for inaction by the international community (Fox, 2001).
22
23

24
25 Development organisations are increasingly identifying and working alongside a
26 range of stakeholders in situations of chronic insecurity (sometimes including
27 combatants) in attempts to reduce poverty and increase everyday security within the
28 boundaries of immediate possibility, rather than waiting for the ideal of peace
29 (Brinkerhoff, 2008; Korf, 2005; Menkhaus, 2004). Although these moves are of
30 course debated (Duffield, 2001a), with some arguing for example that the emphasis
31 on security can militate against the establishment of civil society organisations who
32 can advocate for government accountability (Howell and Lind, 2009), others have
33 argued that there is a real imperative to securitise development practice: "The most
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3 important reason why the development community should engage with security
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5 issues is that they are far too important to be left to security specialists alone”
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8 (Luckham, 2009: 2).
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10
11 There are three important points to make about this practical contrast between
12
13 security-asylum and security-development contexts, in relation to asylum seekers
14
15 and the securityscape. The first may seem obvious, but is worth highlighting: it is
16
17 greater insecurity in the places that people are fleeing that leads to greater numbers
18
19 of asylum seekers, not lax asylum regimes. Further, the vast majority of asylum
20
21 seekers flee to neighbouring countries: the lowest-income countries bear a
22
23 disproportionate amount of the global burden from chronic insecurity (United Nations
24
25 High Commissioner for Refugees, 2012). Second, it is in the context of chronic
26
27 insecurity that aid donors are focusing on security, i.e. where insecurity comes to be
28
29 seen as chronic but localised in particular regions of the world, militarised forms of
30
31 intervention to contain and securitise whole populations may seem more effective
32
33 than individualised asylum claims (Duffield, 2001b). Taken together, these first two
34
35 points demonstrate that an appreciation of the variations across the global
36
37 securityscape may assist in perceiving how security-development and security-
38
39 immigration nexuses can be mutually reinforcing in paradoxically both necessitating
40
41 and undermining the global asylum system.
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46
47 The third point, as Chris Philo (2012: 2) points out, is that small-s security is
48
49 profoundly interlinked with big-S Security concerns, and this is true both in places
50
51 where violence is an exceptional occurrence and when it is banal, as many feminist
52
53 security researchers have made clear (Fluri, 2010; Hudson, 2005). The shifts in
54
55 global trends from war to ‘enduring disorder’ (Goodhand, 2003) make it imperative to
56
57 focus on insecurity in relation to everyday practice across the securityscape, both in
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1
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3 terms of the multiple forms of violence *practised* across the planet, and in terms of
4
5 the *practical* effects of insecurity at a range of scales, not only on the globe and the
6
7 nation, but also on the community, the household and the body (Orjuela, 2010;
8
9 Sylvester, 2011). The remainder of the paper will focus on the material substance of
10
11 the embodied experiences of asylum seekers as they are explored in a novel 'Harare
12
13 North'.
14
15

16 17 **Embodied insecurities: asylum seeker corporealities in the securityscape** 18

19
20 A brief reading of Brian Chikwava's (2010) novel 'Harare North' will explore some
21
22 issues surrounding substantial bodily experiences of insecurity. The novel is
23
24 narrated by an unnamed young man from Zimbabwe, who enters the UK as an
25
26 asylum seeker, claiming that he has been persecuted by the Zimbabwean
27
28 government for being in the youth movement of the opposition party. However this is
29
30 untrue: he has in fact been a 'Green Bomber', one of the "boys of the jackal breed"
31
32 who carried out violence against suspected "enemies of the state" (Chikwava, 2010:
33
34 8). In some ways then, this is a classically unreliable narrator – he lies to others and
35
36 may well be lying to himself. However, this narrator needs to be seen in the context
37
38 of the complex politics of asylum narratives (Farrier, 2012), where the narration of
39
40 insecurity is often literally vital, but where there is often "narrative inequality"
41
42 (Blommaert, 2001), i.e. where credibility can be dependent on the exposition of
43
44 complex insecurities in the requisite cultural and bureaucratic modes of address.
45
46 The novel offers a forum for more complex story-telling, in which the messiness of
47
48 emotions, of sensibilities, and of motivations can be explored (see Lewis, Rodgers
49
50 and Woolcock, 2008, who make a similar point about novels as accounts of
51
52 development experience). Even though the narrator was a perpetrator of violence in
53
54 Zimbabwe, and continues to be manipulative and violent now that he is in London,
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1
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3 and Chikwava gives a clear exposition of this, the novel can also be read as an
4
5 extended meditation on the ways in which this young man is also a victim of his
6
7 insecurity as an asylum seeker in London, as well as a victim of the violence of
8
9 Zimbabwean politics. As Kizito Muchemwa (2011: 404) puts it, in one of the few
10
11 academic readings of the novel that have yet been published: "He carries with him
12
13 the ideological baggage of a party that has deformed him... [heir to a liberation
14
15 generation] 'born of violence'." This ambiguity around violence – the blurring of the
16
17 perpetrator/victim distinction, the discursive and practical forms that deforming
18
19 violence can take – continues throughout the novel, and is, I will argue, played out in
20
21 part through the narrator's views and experiences of the body.
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24

25
26 The novel begins with a prologue (pp. 1-3), in which we see the landscape of London
27
28 through which the narrator is walking (Brixton tube station, Lambeth Town Hall)
29
30 deliberately juxtaposed with Zimbabwe as portrayed in The Evening Standard at the
31
32 newspaper vendors and in the narrator's thoughts. So the asylum seeker's
33
34 landscape involves a constant switching of attention across this split scape. The
35
36 narrator too is immediately shown to be split. He begins by projecting an image of
37
38 himself, and that image is full of embodied violence. In the first paragraph of the
39
40 novel (p. 1), he tells us that he has been exploiting his friend Shingi (a fellow asylum-
41
42 seeker that he knew when they were both children) to get food and has callously
43
44 discarded him once he became less useful: "... like many immigrant on *whose face*
45
46 *fate had drive one large peg and hang tall stories*, Shingi had not only become poor
47
48 breadwinner but he had now turn into big headache for me. When it became clear
49
50 that our friendship is now big danger to my plan, me I find no reason to continue it,
51
52 so I finish it off straight and square". The violence of the imagery of the coat peg
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3 driven into the face is given force by the humorous reversal, that the narrator's head
4
5 is now the one feeling the pain.
6
7

8
9 Coming out of Brixton tube station, the narrator sees a newspaper with an image of
10
11 Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe and a story about Zimbabwe having a
12
13 shortage of toilet paper. He recalls with detached amusement: "That make me
14
15 imagine how after many times of bum wiping with the ruthless and patriotic Herald
16
17 newspaper, *everyone's troubled buttock holes get vex and now turn into likkle red*
18
19 *knots*. But except for this small complaint from them dark and hairy buttocks, me I
20
21 don't see what the whole noise is all about." The redness of the knotted buttocks is
22
23 reinforced by the reference to the traffic lights being "red like ketchup" (with its link to
24
25 fake blood), and the real anger felt by people who are forced to use newspaper
26
27 instead of toilet roll is ironically offset by the comedic stereotype of dark, hairy
28
29 buttocks. Achille Mbembe (2001) affirms the importance of obscene imagery,
30
31 particularly of the buttocks, as an established way of undermining political opponents
32
33 in some African contexts, and here the humour of the buttocks allows the narrator to
34
35 dismiss any opposition to "His Excellency" Robert Mugabe.
36
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39
40 As the narrator walks on he has to push past a group of mothers standing with their
41
42 pushchairs on the pavement, and they give him "*loud looks*". Their eyes embody the
43
44 tension of suppressed conflict with more established Londoners.
45
46

47
48 Yet on the very next page (p.2), each of these tough stances – about Shingi, about
49
50 Zimbabwe, about Londoners – is undermined. Shingi is in fact dying, and the
51
52 narrator is worried "what kind of mouth Shingi is going to starting throwing around if
53
54 he ever recover... But there is nothing I can do". The narrator describes himself as
55
56 "illegal" and he is reliant on passing off Shingi's identity as his own, because Shingi
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1
2
3 has had his asylum application approved: the narrator has Shingi's passport,
4
5 National Insurance Number and his mobile phone. So instead of callously exploiting
6
7 Shingi, he is in fact dependent on him, and afraid of the damage he can cause. His
8
9 friend's mouth is now a powerful weapon that Shingi can throw around, rather than
10
11 his face being subject to the violence of circumstance.
12

13
14
15 The narrator does not want to tell Shingi's mother in Zimbabwe that her son is dying,
16
17 because "I see no point in making she cry", so he sends her cheerful letters and
18
19 packets of money. He is beginning to feel trapped by her increasing financial
20
21 demands but: "you know what it is like when you is trying to keep old hen happy" (p.
22
23 3). So instead of maintaining a detached amusement about the worsening financial
24
25 situation in Zimbabwe, his money is bound up in remittance relationships with his
26
27 friend's family, and in turn those relationships rely on the image of an old mother
28
29 either crying or happy. The narrator's emotions surrounding Zimbabwe move from
30
31 dismissal of anger through the imagery of buttocks, to responsibility and attachment
32
33 through the happy or crying face.
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37
38 The narrator also reflects on the homeless Londoners who are at present in his
39
40 house, Dave and Jenny, and thinks how the look in their eyes is just like that of an
41
42 asylum-seeker, like himself: "They is the first poor white folk that I ever get to know...
43
44 they also have them asylum-seeker eyes; them eyes with the shine that come about
45
46 only because of a reptile kind of life, that life surviving big mutilation in the big city
47
48 and living inside them holes". So instead of mutual antagonism with Londoners, the
49
50 narrator recognises a deep affinity between himself and them, embodied in their
51
52 eyes, in that their shared insecurity within the city is hurting them all. In fact the title
53
54 of the novel, 'Harare North' is a rearrangement of the globe landscape to bring
55
56 London into close contact with Zimbabwe: London is Harare North, and
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1
2
3 Johannesburg is Harare South, because of the large numbers of Zimbabwean
4
5 migrants in each city (Mbiba, 2012).
6
7

8 This tension between the narrator posing as a hard man who practises violence, and
9
10 yet also experiencing ongoing insecurity continues to be inscribed on the body
11
12 throughout the rest of the novel. When he remembers his time in the Green
13
14 Bombers, for example, he offers vivid accounts of the kinds of 'forgiveness' meted
15
16 out to those his commander Comrade Mhiripiri considers 'traitors': "For traitors
17
18 punishment is the best forgiveness, that's what he say." (p. 19). Muchemwa (2011:
19
20 395) places this oxymoronic use of forgiveness to mean punishment in the context of
21
22 the pervasive violence both of Zimbabwean colonial experience and of its liberation
23
24 politics, when society becomes discursively polarised between 'liberators' and
25
26 traitors. When the boys corner an opposition party supporter, the narrator recalls
27
28 that "the traitor... have been farm labour supervisor all his life and now have barrel
29
30 stomach that is so taut any blunt old instrument can punch through it easy if that
31
32 become necessary" (p. 19), and the boys get so drunk on power (and possibly also
33
34 on alcohol, though this is less clear) that by the morning they tell the police "We give
35
36 him one heap of forgiveness and can't remember nothing at all about what happen
37
38 because he get us so drunk" (p. 20). Yet when he faces the threat of prison the
39
40 narrator flees Zimbabwe because he remembers a previous experience of prison
41
42 where he too was vulnerable to penetration: "I have been there before and it is full of
43
44 them people that carry likkle horrors such as them sharpened bicycle spokes and
45
46 they want you to donate your buttocks so they can give you Aids; if you refuse then
47
48 bicycle spoke go through your stomach like it is made of toilet paper" (p. 21).
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55 The narrator's fear of AIDS infects his relationship with Shingi, and his belief that he
56
57 has it (having misunderstood the test results that said he was HIV negative) haunts
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3 the novel, an insecurity that fuelled his violence in the Green Bombers (he refers to
4 himself here in the second person): "Life is not fair, you even tell that traitor in
5 Goromonzi when you give him your touch because you was knowing that tomorrow
6 you is going to be dead... By the end he can only tell you apart from everyone
7 because of your touch; the skill and the laughter... Life is not fair, me I know" (p.
8 212).

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17 The body is not always framed with violence, but is heavy with a range of
18 attachments and detachments that emphasise security and insecurity. The
19 narrator's attraction to another of the people with whom he shares a house, Tsitsi, a
20 young Zimbabwean mother from a rural area, is framed through his vulnerability to
21 her body as it moves around the house. Often his focus on her body is framed
22 through her breastfeeding, in which the narrator seems to find a vicarious comfort:
23 "She tiny skeleton fold neat as she sit on the bed, crossing she legs and holding the
24 baby close to she bosom. With one hand she pull she blouse up. She don't wear
25 bra; she left breast jump out and hang like talisman... I stand leaning against the wall
26 watching" (p. 32). The narrator is at his most vulnerable in relation to Tsitsi and the
27 baby: there are several tender moments between them, and the narrator ultimately
28 gives money to Tsitsi for the baby's care when it is sick, and violently removes her
29 abusive lover, Aleck (p. 132). Again however, this relationship is ambivalent: the
30 narrator uses Tsitsi to manipulate Shingi, inciting him to seduce her in inappropriate
31 ways, while at the same time he is drawing her to himself through his money and
32 attention (pp. 156-8); his reaction to Tsitsi's abusive lover is not just about the abuse
33 (p. 130), but is also to do with his resentment of paying Aleck rent for the squat they
34 are living in.
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3 The narrator despises Aleck because of the work he did in Zimbabwe and in the UK,
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5 and this draws attention to the status attached to particular kinds of labour in the
6
7 asylum seeker 'taskscape': Aleck sold fruit and vegetables at a bus terminus in
8
9 Zimbabwe (p. 94) and is a BBC (British Buttock Cleaner or carer) in London (p. 117).
10
11 For the narrator this heavily embodied work, lifting, carrying, wiping, all of which
12
13 Aleck tries to keep secret, leads to an immediate loss of status for Aleck in his eyes.
14
15 However BBC work is constantly held out as the only real possibility of work in
16
17 London, and is in reality a common area of work for Zimbabwean migrants
18
19 (McGregor, 2007): the young men each try several other forms of work, most
20
21 involving hard physical graft "shifting mud with shovels and sweat" (p. 49) but they
22
23 always lose them or are despised or exploited because of their insecure immigration
24
25 status. Embodied ways of finding a secure social and economic status within the
26
27 asylum seeker taskscape are hard to find.
28
29
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31
32 Ultimately we see the slow disintegration of the narrator's sense of bodily integrity.
33
34 After Shingi becomes a drug addict and begins to take food from bins in alleyways,
35
36 he is assaulted by a homeless person competing for the same food, and is taken to
37
38 hospital in a coma (pp. 185-6). The narrator immediately begins to speak
39
40 intermittently about himself in the second person (p. 188), and when he looks down
41
42 into a puddle, he sees Shingi looking back (p. 229). The narrator loses the ability to
43
44 eat and sleep, and begins to experience anxious sensations: "My chest is full of
45
46 wriggling things now and get tight like my suitcase" (p. 204). His suitcase, in which
47
48 he has been collecting money from the start of the novel, slowly empties as he sends
49
50 money to Shingi's relatives in Zimbabwe, until finally, alone and homeless, he forgets
51
52 to lock it and finds it is empty. From the violent and manipulative man he has
53
54 portrayed himself as in the first sentence of the novel, by the last sentence he has
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3 lost his capacity to take any form of embodied action, least of all violence: “You tell
4 the right foot to go in one direction and he is being traitor shoe-doctor and tell left
5
6 the right foot to go in one direction and he is being traitor shoe-doctor and tell left
7
8 foot to go in another direction. You stand there in them mental backstreets and one
9
10 big battle rage even if you have no more ginger for it” (p. 230).

11
12 This novel therefore enables an appreciation of how security and insecurity are
13
14 profoundly linked with embodiment. The asylum seeker here inhabits a transnational
15
16 securityscape, the linked landscape of Zimbabwe and London, across which there
17
18 are continuous and discontinuous forms of insecurity. The asylum seeker embodies
19
20 these insecurities through mobility, but also in his everyday relationships with and in
21
22 both places, so that ultimately, when the weight of insecurity becomes too much to
23
24 bear, this is experienced by the asylum seeker not only economically, socially and
25
26 psychologically, but also corporeally.
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31 **Conclusion**

32
33 This paper has brought together two nexuses – security-development and security-
34
35 asylum – in order to suggest that the figure of the asylum seeker cuts across the two:
36
37 the paper therefore proposes the concept of the securityscape. In exploring this
38
39 concept, the paper has shown that securitisation needs to be understood not just in
40
41 terms of ways of seeing, i.e. representation, but also in terms of practice and
42
43 substance, i.e. doing and being. Practice is explored at a range of scales and across
44
45 the securityscape, whilst substance is explored through a brief critical reading of
46
47 ‘Harare North’.
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52
53 There are two implications of this emphasis on corporeal substance. The first is that
54
55 security becomes an issue for cultural geographers, as much as for political
56
57 geographers. Political geographers have recognised the global spatial *reach* of
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1
2
3 insecurity for some time, the geopolitical and transnational range of conflict and
4
5 insecurity (Bialasiewicz, Campbell, Elden, Graham et al., 2007; Ingram and Dodds,
6
7 2009). There is a need for more studies in cultural geography of the material *depth*
8
9 of insecurity, its embodied and substantial relations and effects (Farrier, 2012;
10
11 Puumala and Pehkonen, 2010).

12
13
14 The second implication is for the everyday politics of in/security. When security is
15
16 understood as seeing, doing and being, securitisation becomes a diffuse activity, not
17
18 confined to formal political and policy arenas: “instead of a site of normality which the
19
20 professional politics of security seek to protect and work from the outside, daily life
21
22 turns into sites of agency where people work and rework security policies in light of
23
24 the complex demands and experiences they need to deal with” (Huysmans, 2009, p.
25
26 205).

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31 Much analysis of securitisation focuses on the roles of governments and other
32
33 powerful actors in manipulating and creating security discourses in order to maintain
34
35 political legitimacy: in this logic the asylum seeker, or even the migrant, is an intrinsic
36
37 threat to the myth of the homogeneous nation (Bigo, 2002; Nyers, 2003). In this
38
39 context, securitisation of migration is nothing new, but is a continuation of historical
40
41 attempts to limit and abject the immigrant or asylum seeker as threat to the national
42
43 community (Flynn, 2005; Geddes, 2005), so that, in the case of the UK, discourses
44
45 of radicalisation and extremism in Muslim communities blur into concerns over
46
47 violence following the Blackburn riots (Noxolo, 2009d; Spalek, 2007), whilst post-
48
49 9/11 concerns over terrorism blur into the pre-9/11 furore over asylum seekers
50
51 entering the UK illegally from the Sangatte refugee camp (Schuster, 2003).
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3 Similarly, securitisation of development is often understood as a logic of western
4 power (Duffield, 2007), so that there is a focus on the instrumental functions of
5 security discourses for justifying intervention (Reid-Henry, 2011). Within this logic,
6 threat and mistrust can attach to non-dominant or diasporic routes for contributing to
7 development (Mercer, Page and Evans, 2009; Raghuram, 2009), including red-
8 flagging of financial transfers (Atia, 2007). However an awareness of the
9 differentiated and uneven nature of the securityscape will remind us that western-
10 centred security discourses (for example around the so-called 'war on terror' post-
11 9/11) are neither necessarily universally relevant (Nadarajah, 2009), nor uncontested
12 (Sharp, 2011).
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26 Understanding the securityscape as part of an embodied politics of difference
27 focuses attention on the ways in which images and accounts of asylum seeker
28 bodies are deployed. So for example advocacy and asylum seeker groups deploy
29 and extend securitising discourses to include asylum seekers as *victims* of
30 insecurity, not only in terms of emphasising the persecution they are fleeing
31 internationally, but also in terms of sharing a fear of terrorist bombs, for example as
32 people feeling as vulnerable as everyone else using the public transport system in
33 the immediate aftermath of the bombing of the London underground on 7th July
34 2005 (Noxolo, 2009c; Refugee Council, 2007). As one asylum seeker was quoted
35 as saying:
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49 Nothing different between us, like British people or refugee people or asylum
50 seeker, or ethnic minority who live in this country. There's nothing different
51 between them to, we scared of terrorists as well. We ran away from the
52 terrorists, from the, you know. That's what we all think, nothing different. If
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3 anything happened in this country, it's happening to us as well, we are worried
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5 about it, we are afraid about it (Refugee Council, 2007, p. 13).
6
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8 Similarly, development NGOs and United Nations reports (Duffield, 2010, p. 55)
9
10 have attempted to broaden notions of security to include poverty and human rights
11
12 demands. Deploying the concept of 'human security', these groups point to gross
13
14 global inequalities as a form of international aggression through inaction, which
15
16 threatens the lives of the world's most vulnerable people: "government and
17
18 international institutional inaction is associated with mass avoidable deaths of infants
19
20 from malnutrition and malaria..." (Roberts, 2008, p. 9).
21
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23

24 One of the effects of this diffusion of securitising agency however, is that security
25
26 becomes a diffuse and inchoate sense of unease, with shifting and often unspecified
27
28 threats (Bigo, 2002). Partly for this reason, and because the securityscape interacts
29
30 with a range of other transnational 'scapes' in the everyday politics of difference (see
31
32 above), the securitising effects of the deployment of images of asylum seeker bodies
33
34 can be hard to predict or control. A range of commentators (Bigo, 2002; Leander,
35
36 2006) have argued that the securitising agency of security professionals is
37
38 fundamentally practice-based, operating through technologies of surveillance and
39
40 the active management of mobility. It therefore becomes very difficult for NGOs to
41
42 intervene through traditional political advocacy, because they become drawn into
43
44 these same technologies, sharing forums to debate the link between asylum seekers
45
46 and terrorism for example, and producing knowledges about risk management (see
47
48 Aradau, 2004) that are quickly redeployed in the practice of managing security:
49
50 "Even when NGOs intervene, they can do so only by turning professional, by
51
52 producing this kind of knowledge" (Bigo, 2002: 83).
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3 Similarly, Aradau's (2004) analysis of the discursive inter-meshing of humanitarian
4 and security concerns in relation to trafficked women shows how the contestation of
5 images around a politics of pity and a politics of security engages with a politics of
6 gendered identity, in which discourses surrounding trafficked women deploy
7 "innocenting strategies" (Aradau, 2004, p. 263), such as displaying the marks on
8 their bodies from physical abuse, or displaying instances of exceptional physical
9 beauty or religiosity. These victim images oscillate however with wider portrayals of
10 the women as willing prostitutes, in that they often consented to be illegal
11 immigrants, and the effect is often that the women are contained and returned
12 through a range of pervasive risk management technologies.
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26 Peter Nyers (2003) points to the possibility of going beyond these alternative
27 securitisations, and thinking about alternatives to securitisation. He offers a case
28 study of asylum seekers in Canada resisting deportation and seeking sanctuary in
29 disused buildings, and argues that these groups, through their politicised actions,
30 have developed forms of 'abject cosmopolitanism', resisting national boundaries, and
31 arguing for political subjectivity across borders. This is not just a desecuritisation
32 (Waeber, 1995), resituating asylum seekers within the securityscape, but is a form of
33 practical cosmopolitanism, because the asylum seekers actively "denationalise the
34 state" (Nyers, 2003, p. 1090), by clearly demonstrating that non-citizens can have
35 political voice and agency. It seeks to relocate asylum seekers outside the
36 securityscape and in alternative arenas of cosmopolitan practice.
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51 So what are the alternatives to securitisation that can be practised and embodied in
52 a more substantial struggle for meaning? (Tolia-Kelly, 2012). And how do these
53 practical alternatives relate to the banal violence, both institutional and personal, that
54 asylum seekers face across the securityscape? The answers to these questions are
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not easy to find but, like the body, they are pressing and insistent in their demands
(Noxolo, 2009b; Pile, 2006).

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