Title: The War on Meaninglessness: a Counter-terrorist Self through an Absent Terrorist Other

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Introduction

Over the last 15 years, Europe has not been confronted with terrorist incidents as frequently as other regions of the world have been (IEP, 2015), making terrorism such as the recent November 2015 Paris Attacks rather exceptional. Expectedly, European societies ought not to be afraid of terrorism. Nevertheless, Bauman argues, Europe is most addicted to fear and obsessed with security (2004: 94). Especially the fear of terrorism is used and exaggerated by the European Union (EU) that has ambitions to be(come) a powerful, global counter-terrorist actor (Monar, 2015). Having these strong ambitions, an EU counter-terrorist identity is (re)defined in opposition to a terrorist 'other' (Baker-Beall, 2014: 20), leading to an EU counter-terrorism agenda that includes the strengthening of EU-borders in which port security has become crucial (Albrecht, 2002; Malcolm, 2011).

This contribution[1] shall scrutinise port security by exploring how, on micro-level, occupational identities of frontline port policing staff are (re)established through the terrorist other. It shall do so by, first of all, briefly describing the visited Rotterdam and Hamburg ports, and by elaborating on port security governance and conceptualising the "port securityscape". Furthermore, an overview will be provided of the ethnographic fieldwork done amongst operational port police officers and security officers who work in the port securityscape. Then key findings shall be presented, based on which will be argued that frontline port policing staff in the Rotterdam and Hamburg ports are employed in highly securitised realms that are saturated with War on Terror governance. However, they have never been face-to-face confronted with terrorism, leading to a face-to-face confrontation with an everyday survival of an occupational War on Meaninglessness instead.

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[1] Some material in this article has been taken from *Policing, Port Security and Crime Control: An Ethnography of the Port Securityscape* (forthcoming 2016) from Routledge.

Context

The Ports of Rotterdam and Hamburg

The maritime sector is globally responsible for moving 80% of everything we consume (UNCTAD, 2013). When considering container transport specifically, which represents half of global seaborne trade value, it turns out the world's 20 leading ports (Rotterdam at 11 and Hamburg at 14) handled 47% of the world's container port throughput in 2012, which is an increase of 3.2% in 2012 compared with 2011 (ibid. 88). Europe, therefore, had (and still has) a crucial role in container transport, of which 20% passes through the ports of Rotterdam, Hamburg and Antwerp (ibid. 98). The Port of Rotterdam was the busiest port in the world until 2004 and remains to be the biggest port in Europe, covering 10,500 hectares of industrial sites, making the port 42 kilometres long with 65 kilometres of quayside. Most of its port facilities—ranging from petrochemical sites to cargo handling sites to dry bulk storage (e.g. sand)—are 24/7 accessible for ships that often have their first and/or last port of call in Rotterdam being the maritime gateway to Europe. Being of major importance to the regional and national economy, the port is an international, multi-modal transport hub, meaning, it handles ships, trains, road transport and networked pipelines (Port of Rotterdam Authority, 2014). Almost identical to Rotterdam, yet in size slightly smaller, is the Port of Hamburg that covers 7,216 hectares of industrial sites, with 49 kilometres of quay walls of which 12% is used by container handling port facilities. Similar to Rotterdam, it is an international, multi-modal transport hub and of particular importance to the Baltic region (Hafen Hamburg, 2014).

Port Security and the ISPS Code

Ports are vital transport hubs but also fragile, because any disruption instantly affects global trade. Nevertheless, and despite the growing number of criminologists that are paying

increasingly more attention to security (cf. Schuilenburg, 2015; Zedner, 2009), port security specifically has hardly been researched criminologically, whereas the maritime sector has changed dramatically by post-9/11 governance. The scarce criminological attention paid to port security consists of discourse analyses of post-9/11 maritime policies (Malcolm, 2011) and social-network analyses of key port policing and security stakeholders (Brewer, 2014; Hoogenboom, 2010). Despite the importance and vulnerability of ports, and the influence of War on Terror governance, an *ethnographic* analysis of post-9/11 operational port security realities has remained non-existent in criminology, until recently (AUTHOR, …).

Whereas *safety* has been the predominant discourse within the maritime industry since the sinking of Titanic tragedy in 1912, there was a relatively low interest of the USA government in port security throughout the twentieth century (Booth and Altenbrun, 2002). Actually, maritime industry leaders 'apparently perceive[d] the terrorist threat at USA ports as remote and the risk minimal' (Stephens, 1989: 29). 9/11 has radically changed this (American) laissez-faire attitude towards maritime and port security. The USA began to advocate stringent global maritime security measures for ships and ports via the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) (Von Hoesslin, 2005). Especially the US Coast Guard used strong War on Terror-rhetoric to push forward the development of global maritime security legislation (Metaparti, 2010). Hence, being largely motivated by the USA agenda of (media based) fear of severe economic consequences of terrorist attacks on cargo by (small) vessels or on ports, the IMO ordered its Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) to improve ship and port security (Schoenbaum and Langston, 2003). At that point, there was much emphasis laid upon automatic identification systems (AIS) on ships; security plans for ships, port facilities and off-shore terminals; identity verification of seafarers; and container security throughout the supply chain (ibid. 1336). Consequently, merely a year after the 9/11 attacks, the first international code on ship and port security was born. In

December 2002, the International Ship and Port Facility (ISPS) Code was adopted by the Contracting Governments (CG's) to SOLAS, making compliance with the ISPS Code mandatory from 1 July 2004 onward. Its Preamble uses post-9/11 rhetoric, stating that '[f]ollowing the tragic events of 11th September 2001, the twenty-second session of the Assembly of the International Maritime Organization (the Organization), in November 2001, unanimously agreed to the development of new measures relating to the security of ships and of port facilities' (IMO 2003: 2).

The ISPS Code has introduced numerous roles and regulations to achieve that all relevant parties perceive and manage security threats correspondingly (Bichou, 2004: 328). Although the ISPS Code leaves room for variations amongst ports and port facilities, the ISPS Code measures must be complied with in order to receive international passenger ships and cargo ships of 500 gross tonnage and above. In the Code, the mandatory part A lists obligations to comply with, whereas part B makes recommendations. The ports of this study are ports in EU member states, and because EU Regulation No. 725/2004 aims to harmonise port and ship security between specifically the ports of EU member states, EU ports must treat certain paragraphs of Part B of the ISPS Code as if they are mandatory. So, for example, whereas drills and exercises are recommended by the ISPS Code in Part B, because of the EU Regulation, drills and exercises are obligated for European ports (2004: L 129/9).

The CGs are instructed by the ISPS Code to obtain and maintain ISPS compliance of port facilities by setting three security levels[2]. Designated Authorities (DAs) should be established to execute their security duties under the ISPS Code. In Rotterdam, the Port of Rotterdam Authority fulfils DA tasks, and in Hamburg the DA consists of delegates from the Hamburg Waterways Police and the Hamburg Port Authority, making up together

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[2] Level 1 is always present, level 2 stands for heightened security, and level 3 is exceptional.

the Designated Authority for Port Security. These DAs are semi-public/semi-private organisations that manage, operate and develop the port area, and regulate and navigate shipping. They have, therefore, public *and* corporate interests (in investing) in port security (Hafen Hamburg, 2014; Port of Rotterdam Authority, 2014).

Governments must assess port facilities via a Port Facility Security Assessment (PFSA), for which Port Facility Security Officers (PFSOs) are appointed. They fulfil the delegated security tasks of the government, such as the development, implementation and maintenance of Port Facility Security Plans (PFSPs). PFSOs must identify (threats to) critical port infrastructure and prioritise which security measures must be taken. However, there are various differences in security threats for each port and its facilities. For example, a petrochemical port facility has a higher explosion risk than a dry bulk terminal. A PFSO also cooperates with the Ship Security Officer (SSO) through a Declaration of Security (DoS), which is a document that assesses the potential threat a ship can pose to a port facility and vice versa, and what responsibilities each party has. Moreover, PFSOs undertake frequent security inspections at port facilities, organise ISPS Code exercises (once a year) and security drills (four times a year), communicate with authorities about threats, and appoint security services. So, overall, the ISPS Code frames how port security must be established and it directs who is responsible for (delegation of) security-related tasks.

Initially, the ISPS Code received much critique from within the maritime sector; its philosophy was misunderstood and deemed unrealistic, resulting in substantial resistance and a lack of internalisation, which complicated a quick transition (Von Hoesslin, 2005). There were many practical and logistical questions, such as which body was responsible for which task and, for example, how many CCTVs at port facilities were enough (Liss, 2011). These transition issues indicate that the Code would merely benefit American and European maritime trade interests, while the rest of the world's ports would undergo

extreme difficulty in complying with the Code (Kim and Lee, 2013). So, the Code's purpose to harmonise maritime security to protect the global (maritime) trade against terrorism, can be perceived as a tool for the USA and Europe to control global maritime transport, because, if a port or a ship does not comply with the Code, it becomes extremely difficult to trade with the USA and Europe. This has put pressure on port officials and ship-owners everywhere, who have not seen a clear increase of security but instead an increase of bureaucracy (Liss, 2011: 148-149). Whether the Code increased port security to protect against terrorism or not, it drastically changed the open port landscape into a closed-off port securityscape (AUTHOR, 20…).

The Port Securityscape

The port securityscape is a variation of the securityscape-concept that implies a description of geographical locations (Azaryahu, 2000), where communities live their ordinary lives in protected spaces, continuously awaiting threats. In securityscapes, security is done in spaces of non-stop presence of military, police and other agencies that control the mobility of subjects considered dangerous (Rowley and Weldes, 2012). There, precautionary measures reign over social life, where 'security' is both highlighted and made concrete 'as a tenet of collective faith and a symptom of the [communities'] condition' (Azaryahu, 2000: 103). To think in terms of securityscapes then is to grasp 'ordinary and trivial examples […] for understanding the extent to which securityscapes indeed constitute an important aspect of ordinary life' and where 'rituals of security' are institutionalised (ibid.). These (sometimes aggressive) rituals consist of, for example, identity checks, where one's civil liberties can be seriously violated. However, one could also feel satisfied that there are so many security measures taken, which provide a (false) sense of security. Therefore, the securityscape is not 'only "what we see" but also "how we see it". Securityscapes, like landscapes, represent a point of view' (ibid. 113).

In securityscapes, public and private organisations provide security together. In the ports of Hamburg and Rotterdam, these are, first and foremost, the port police forces and security companies, followed by the customs agencies, harbour masters, environmental protection agencies, and municipalities. 9/11 changed the port landscape through the ISPS Code that not only introduced the new regulations and requirements as presented in in the previous section; the Code also put the different policing actors together through multi-agency partnerships that police ports under the blanket term 'port security', sharing the same jurisdiction and cooperating together on (inter)national and local levels (Brewer, 2014). This multi-agency is part of the very port community it protects against a range of terrorist, criminal and environmental threats. Simultaneously, they obligate port community members to show IDs at identity checkpoints and check their backgrounds, ranging from 'spouses, parents, and spouses' parents to 'credit history, criminal history', even 'skin colour' and 'travel history" (Cowen, 2007: 33). The port police and security officers involved in this study carried out, amongst other port policing duties, such ID and background checks for which they have received far-going authorities. To certain degree, they (are expected to) treat employees as security risks rather than as employees, making these employees 'secondary to the logistical concerns of the ports', turning their non-compliance 'with the demands of security and of economy […] into something like a criminal act' (Van Oenen, 2010: 89).

Methods

Ethnographic fieldwork

From March 2011 until August 2012, I accompanied port police and security officers in their familiar work environments, by walking along, driving along, sailing along and doing

office work. I was thus 'walked through' the participants' everyday work lives and studied their experiences, interpretations, and practices, letting me obtain 'responses from participants while they actively inhabit specific [worker] contexts' (Carpiano, 2009: 264). With enough flexibility, I moved around in port facility perimeters, port police stations and security companies, and in cars and aboard ships. There was not a thoroughly structured plan during an average fieldwork day, although I did know whom I was going to work with, exploring a list of pre-formed 'sensitising concepts' (Blumer, 1954). During day-long participant observations, I sometimes found myself doing in-depth interviews with participants, if only because there was not that much to do, reflecting the occasionally inherently boring nature of security work (Konopinski, 2014). So, interviews led to (participant) observations and vice versa, evidencing that ethnographic study in extremely securitised spaces is also 'negotiated with subjects of study, invented or reinvented on the spot' (Ferrell, 2009: 12–13).

Despite having had the ability to move around freely, *entering* the Rotterdam and Hamburg port securityscapes has been difficult. It was impossible for me to arrive at a port facility and 'collect' research participants, because port facilities are fenced and surrounded by CCTV systems everywhere, inside and outside. Hence, I called port police forces and security companies, only to be told I should send an email to their public relation managers, who most of the time never responded. However, some did respond and invited me to come over for initial interviews with them. Representatives tended to give a promotional talk about port security; something I could find online as well. Much effort was put into merely arranging these first informal interviews, without being fully confident an interview would actually take place. The difficulty and uncertainty of gaining access indicates how closed and secretive the port securityscape (intentionally) is and remains. Even if management would permit me to talk with their operational staff, I had to understand staff would be selected and pre-instructed to not talk about confidential information (that I was

not looking for). Through participants who turned out to be gatekeepers within the port securityscape, I also expanded my participant network. Through my informal network, meaning, my family in Rotterdam, and friends and academic colleagues in Rotterdam and Hamburg who knew someone (who knew someone) working at (one of) the ports, I also made connections with participants. Eventually, the participants group (N = 85) consisted of people who fulfilled operational tasks (and some had lower level management tasks). They were part of a network of multi-agency policing bodies in which different state administered police and customs organisations operate alongside security services that have been brought together by the ISPS Code and other crucial port and maritime security laws (Hoogenboom, 2010). I have managed to do fieldwork amongst most of the organisations part of that multi-agency. However, for the final analysis, I focused on the core and largest participant group (N = 61), consisting of operational port police officers (N = 30) and security officers (N = 31). Other participants were customs officers (N = 10) and individuals (N = 14) who were confronted daily with port security through another line of work, such as shipping agents, port authorities, boatmen and maritime engineers.

Fieldwork was done at four police stations; two in Rotterdam and two in Hamburg. Overall, the participating port police officers were responsible for port community policing, water and car ("land") patrols, emergency assistance, resolving port community conflicts and disputes, conducting vehicle inspections, and maintaining close contact with the port facilities about security measures, prevention of environmental wrongdoings and possible criminal activity (e.g. drug transport and theft) and terrorism. Other port police officers executed border control and immigration checks of crew members, criminal investigations, intake of criminal offences and misdemeanours at the waterside, aggression aboard, speeding of boats and fining drunken vessel owners. Furthermore, a few port police officers were assigned to do Port State Control (PSC) inspections on deck. PSC entails validating how SSOs establish proper ship security measures in line with the ISPS Code,

and if these were done accordingly. Other port police officers had environmental policing tasks, based on the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). They would check management of crude oil and waste on deck of a ship. A small group of port police officers were responsible for doing International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code inspections. These inspections took place on deck of container ships and bulk carriers (N = 6). One inspection was aimed at leaked goods in a container that was placed on terminal territory. In fact, because of the different police inspections, I visited several terminals where the ships subject to inspection were docked.

The security officers were, overall, responsible for securing the port facility perimeters, altogether working across different port facilities (N = 9) that I visited regularly, and even daily at a certain point. In fact, for one terminal I received my own access card. Some of the port facilities handled containers, ferries or mass dry bulk, and some were petrochemical sites. The security officers' tasks involved registering employees and visitors, making sure they would comply with security and safety regulations. In case of occupational hazards and emergencies, security officers would apply first-aid to employees. Moreover, they would pick up crews from the ships to get them to the facility's exit and back. Several security officers did car patrols on facility territory to check for weak(ened) points, or assisted non-regular incoming and outgoing trucks with uncontainerised, exceptionally large break bulk cargo. CCTV monitoring of the facilities was an important task for security officers as well. Some security officers were PFSOs and, in order to comply with the ISPS Code, they visited ships to negotiate with SSOs whether a DoS had to be drawn up. At some terminals, security officers were made responsible for sanitary tasks (e.g. cleaning toilets). Another group of security officers that did not (just) provided port facility security services, were tasked to do car patrol and alarm response throughout the entire port area. I therefore also participated during such preventative surveillances by car of non-24/7 port facilities that needed to be locked up. All in all, the fieldwork took

me to the front- and backstage of the port securityscape, from where I could see participants (re)establishing their occupational identity.

Analysis

For the thematic data-analysis, I developed a framework before, during and after fieldwork. While developing this framework, and integrating it with data, occupational identity formation of the participants emerged as the main analytical focus of this study. Hence, to understand identity formation theoretically, insight was gathered from literature on 'othering' (Hegel, 1977; Ricoeur, 1994; Lacan, 2007; Said, 1979). The basic notion of othering is that identity, vis-à-vis the self, is continuously (re)established through the other, or the self 'exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged' (Hegel, 1977: 111). The other, it is argued, does not exist as such, but is still needed as a reality nonetheless, since 'the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other' (Ricoeur, 1994: 3). The other is even desired, because 'man's desire finds its meaning in the other's desire, not so much because the other holds the keys to the desired object, as because his first object(ive) is to be recognized by the other' (Lacan, 2007: 222). Without (being acknowledged by) the other, feelings of (existential) nothingness, or meaninglessness can threaten one's self (Sartre, 2003[1943]). In sum, we all need a (group of) other(s) who need(s) us too to mutually acknowledge each other's identity. That implies that our definition of the other uncovers narratives about ourselves and our morals and values, as much as a definition of us by the other narrates something about that other; they are each other's flipsides (Said, 1979).

In (re)establishing the self that is just and superior, there is a need to construe a risky and inferior other who must be vanquished, as Said argued when he claimed that 'European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as

a sort of surrogate and even underground self' (1979: 3). The participants too set off their *occupational* counter-terrorist self against a particularly *risky* other. Risky others are strangers, unpredictable, and it is unclear what their motivations are for which they must be excluded from society because nobody knows how to prevent their risky behaviour (Hudson, 2009: 19). Through these risky others, the self of the otherer is (re)established, while his behaviour is being (re)constituted as normal (Young, 2007). Thus, that self retrieves meaning from (re)defining risky others.

Defining a just and superior occupational self through a risky and inferior other is especially prevalent amongst police officers that have strong prejudices towards those seen as risky (Reiner, 2010). These prejudices together with moral cynicism result from daily encounters with lawbreakers and other individuals who disrupt public peace and order. These encounters provide '[n]ot only for the police but also among [security] guards […] the ideal breeding place for excessive suspicion and mistrust, which could in an excessive form result in witch hunts, inappropriate searches and needless display of power' (Loyens, 2009: 474). The establishment of a meaningful occupational, counter-terrorist self requires a more negative other to contrast and certify one's own values and morals with; values and morals that are unsure and under pressure (Joffe, 2012). Groups typically targeted in Europe by othering are members who are already part of marginalised groups, such as illegal immigrants, the unemployed, the poor and non-whites (Lupton, 1999). The ISPS Code has saturated the port securityscape with War on Terror governance (Metaparti, 2010), and a crucial category of risky others for the participants were terrorist others. This specific other is imagined in a context of widespread post-9/11 Islamophobia that targets especially members from Muslim minorities living in the global West (Eid and Karim, 2014). They are the 'suitable enemies' for post-9/11 security legislation and governance (Baker-Beall, 2014), such as the ISPS Code. In a War on Terror context, the stories and (lack of) experiences of the participants with the terrorist other reveal (hidden) narratives

of their occupational self (re)configured in the port securityscape that seem to confront them with intrinsic meaninglessness.

Findings

This section explores how the participants consider the terrorist other. It must be addressed that although this other plays a significant role, it remains difficult to determine whether they discuss the terrorist other daily; an ethnographic window into the participant's life never reveals the full story (Carpiano, 2009; Konopinski, 2014). Also, the participants' perception of terrorist threats to their port is limited because they did not have access to intelligence about such threats that officers from other (secret intelligence) agencies may have. Moreover, maybe terrorism would not have come up much without me asking about it, as well as that talking about terrorism could be more attention grabbing than the rather dry topic of checking ships' waste management plans. Still, when participants discussed terrorism, there were three main, recurring narratives that revealed themselves: ghost hunting, lacking terrorist allure and scripting maritime terrorist scenarios.

Ghost hunting

Terrorist attacks with a similar impact such as 9/11 have not taken place in the Netherlands or Germany since 2001 (IEP, 2015); terrorist attacks on the ports of Rotterdam and Hamburg have not happened to this day. Meaning, the participants provide counter-terrorist port policing in the absence of terrorism, and they all have their ideas about the terrorist other. Therefore, all participants were asked the following question: 'Did you ever catch a terrorist?' Usually, shrieking with laughter followed and they would look at me thinking whether I was being serious:

Haha, no! Never, never. Fortunately not. I'm happy I never encountered them. […] Otherwise I

could not have recited it. We all have a family back at home, or not, but I do want to come home at the end of the shift. Look, I try to do my work as good as possible. When I notice something, I try to raise the alarm, like I'm supposed to do. But you never know if it is good [enough] or not (Security officer 1).

Another participant told me, jokingly, that his colleagues and he 'have been looking for Osama Bin Laden, because we wouldn't mind getting that 30 million dollar [bounty], but we didn't find [him] here. Too bad! […] No, [just kidding]'. He did emphasise that '[i]t's a hot topic of course, terrorism' (Port police officer 1). For some of the participants, if they would catch an actual terrorist…

…I'd be front page material, I think, haha. 'Security officer catches terrorist!' Noooo… If only… (Security officer 2).

Although they acknowledge the terrorist threat is there, their statements indicate the terrorist has never been seen, let alone apprehended by them. Those participants claiming they did encounter terrorism, turned out to have caught a mere glimpse of the terrorist other. Still, they made it sound as if they were at a lethal battlefront of the War on Terror, like the following security officer, who discovered an unidentifiable piece of iron wire stuck in the fence of his port facility:

[W]ell, what's stuck in [that fence]? No one recognised it, no one could tell us what it was, neither the government, nor port authorities, NO ONE! No one… What did we do next? We took it up as an ISPS Code matter with authorities. We said 'We do consider this an ISPS incident, combined with the fact we're a [high-risk infrastructure]'. Then things got moving! What happened next? Police brought in a diver team. […] It was arranged very quickly, within four hours! Everything was here! Well, divers went down, and what did they bring up? A huge case filled with sand. […] Besides

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that, there was nothing in it. [...] So you see what kind of consequences [the threat of terrorism] can have (Security officer 3).

During river dredging activities of an environmental agency, cases were lowered to the river bed to measure the amounts of sand that were taken by currents into the river. One of those cases was still attached to the fences, which explains the iron wire. No one communicated this with security officer 3 though or anyone else at his port facility. The ISPS Code and, subsequently, a risk analysis were utilised to identify who put the iron wire, turning the event into a possible terrorist threat. He had to level up to ISPS Security Level 2. Basically, this participant's concern about a 'stick in the mud,' can be translated into a possible terrorist threat, through which he joins the War on Terror.

Despite the absence of terrorism in their port securityscape, turning their operational reality into a ghost hunt, participants do have certain thoughts and shared stories together about the terrorist other. After all, they are employed in a realm where resilience against terrorism is everything and non-compliance with the counter-terrorist ISPS Code is criminalised. Still, as another security officer implied, they 'don't notice anything, because everything you notice, you hear it [and] see it in media' (Security officer 4). Meaning, their constructions of the terrorist other are primarily based on depictions of the Twin Towers on fire, Osama Bin Laden in a cave, videos of terror threats or beheadings by Al-Qaeda and movies using terrorism as entertainment. This is one of the main issues the participants deal with: they must merge the absence of terrorism in the port securityscape with the (over-)representation of terrorism in mass media to (re)establish a meaningful self. This terrorist other that remains unseen, is created through mediatised political rhetoric on and imagery of terrorism. Based on that rhetoric and imagery, according to the participants, terrorists do what they do, because they are radicalised:

That higher purpose. That mind-set. A kind of brainwashing. Including people who enjoyed a good education, suddenly, they radicalise. […] They once, as you might know as well, that they… ehm… the suicide folk, mostly between 18 and 32 years old, that they are the actual… of which I'd say you're within an age range that is susceptible for that kind of [ideology] (Port police officer 2).

According to participants, in particular the Islamic fundamentalist conviction of the terrorist other is what makes someone persistent in terrorising:

When you see, for example, [in] Iran, the Muslims over there, [saying] 'Allah is powerful, Allah is big', then it obviously becomes important at a certain point that people know to which extent [terrorism] becomes dangerous. […] When it's politically and religiously motivated, it becomes dangerous (Security officer 5).

Still, even if you have to deal with Islamic fundamentalists, whether "home-grown" or from certain Islamic regions of the world where terrorist bastions are thought to be stationed, participants would argue not to panic about terrorist attacks, because they are convinced their port is not considered attractive enough by terrorists to attack. It lacks a certain terrorist allure.

Lacking terrorist allure

On 17 November, 2010, a 'terror-alarm' was announced for Germany, as Christmas markets were going to be potential targets of Al-Qaeda terrorists (Solms-Laubach and Spieker, 2010). A few security officers in Hamburg discussed that alarm with me, and like the other participants, they think that that is exactly what terrorists want: societal fear. A terrorist attack does not even have to lead to physical damage. As long as it causes society-wide hysteria through media, it can affect people, a port police officer argued (Port police officer 3). He considered a failed yet virally mediatised terrorist attack more dangerous for

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a port than a hidden terrorist attack that caused actual physical damage. This aside, the Hamburg and Rotterdam ports remain victimless to this point, because, according to another port police officer…

…the terrorist always wants to hit the population. A highly effective publicity stunt, and then it's mostly done in the city (Port police officer 4).

Or put more bluntly by another participant:

Be honest, if you'd be a terrorist, would you attack [this port], in a shit town? While there's a main office [somewhere else]? Central Station? Well, I know what I would do! […] The chance just isn't that big that [something will happen] over here (Security officer 6).

The participants' frustration with their port lacking terrorist allure is in line with previous observations, arguing that '[m]any perceptions of maritime terrorism risks do not align with the reality of threat and vulnerabilities,' because 'the targeting of such [terrorist] attacks is inconsistent with the primary motivation for most terrorist groups (i.e., achieving maximum public attention through inflicted loss of life)' (Greenberg et al., 2006: 140). Statistics indicate a lack of terrorist allure as well; out of 40,126 recorded terrorist attacks, from 1968 until 2007, only 136 (0.34%) targeted the maritime industry (Nincic, 2012). Although acknowledging their ports are not "sexy" enough for the visibility of a terrorist campaign, some participants found it strange their port lacks terrorist allure. The port should be a bigger invitation to terror than any other site, because it has much more potential to cause havoc at, once attacked. Why? Their port is…

…without a doubt an economic node in the whole of Europe. Why wouldn't there be an attack? To bring Europe economically on its knees in one way or the other? (Port police officer 5).

Or as the following security officer implied:

Why wouldn't you want to do it at the port? [This country] is famous for its ports. That's why I would do [a terrorist attack]. […] I was thinking about [terrorist scenarios]. It's not such a strange idea. That's how you can show [that] 'we should actually upgrade security here, look at how bad it is [at this port facility]'. You were able to drive in, just like that. You may have a bomb carried with you. Why not? It could very well be the case you want to destroy [this port company]. You'd see on television, like, [that port company] is doing very well at the moment. Makes more than 10 million a year, and you'd start to think 'F*** [that company], I want to f*** it up. I'll simply put a bomb there. Just park my car there and let it go off, so they won't get that 10 million'. Crazy thoughts, [if] you know what I mean (Security officer 7).

Some participants, especially security officers, stressed their fears of the consequences of a terrorist attack, in order to underline their port may have potential terrorist allure:

That's the thing that scares me! Because when [a terrorist attack] happens, especially in that direction, [of petrochemical port facilities], you'll get one big chain-reaction [of explosions]. All those pipes lying so close to each other… I would NOT be amused. […] That's why I'm scared sometimes that when it happens, how're we going to solve it? (Security officer 8).

These statements on their ports lacking terrorist allure expose personal frustration with the fact their port has remained safe from the terrorist other, excluding participants from the War on Terror they are supposed to be involved in since the ISPS Code came into effect. The occupational self is (re)shaped through their victimlessness, which makes them feel

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excluded from terrorism *by* the terrorists. Due to their feelings of exclusion and wishes of inclusion, therefore, they want to let the world know how big a disaster could unfold if they would be attacked, from which a meaningful occupational self is retrieved. They do so by scripting specific maritime terrorist scenarios.

'If I were a terrorist…': Scripting maritime terrorist scenarios

A port police officer told me, in case his port would be attacked, it is bound to happen, because:

When someone wants [to commit a terrorist attack], he'll get through [the fences]. You won't notice it whatsoever. I always say, especially the evil ones, they won't abide to rules. They won't come in at the main gate [of a terminal]. They know what they do, right? Who wants to, can do it (Port police officer 6).

Indeed, 'if you're a terrorist, you can easily complete a terrorist attack [in this port]. IT'S DONE EASILY!', another participant explained (Port police officer 7). Now, whereas the port police participants are responsible for ensuring that the entire port complies with the ISPS Code to prevent terrorism, security officers are part of that prevention itself by fulfilling the ISPS Code requirements to keep specifically their port facility resilient against terrorism. Similar to port police officers, they too consider prevention against terrorism to be futile:

The effort of [port] companies against terrorism… It's crazy. […] There are no effective measures against terrorism. […] The fact that the Special Forces are trained, like [the counter-terrorism and special operations unit] here, or MI6 [in Britain], or whatever their names might be. THAT is what I DO understand, but what [this port company]'s doing here? Against terrorism? I don't know

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(Security officer 9).

Because participants considered terrorists unstoppable and uncontrollable, the only you thing you can do, is to make it as hard as possible for them. They do so by preparing themselves through prevention-training that is based on maritime terrorist scenarios. Various spectacular and complex scenarios were described to me, of which the most popular were very detailed scenarios in which ships play a leading role:

The threat of a ship is always fourfold: 1) the ship can be used as a weapon. You ram it into a chemical [power]plant or something; or 2) you take its passengers hostage, as happened before; 3) you can transport stuff with it, so goods from which you can build weapons, or persons through which you can make weapons; 4) the last story attached to it, you can use it to make money, and to finance terrorist actions with it, because [terrorism] simply costs loads of money (Port police officer 8).

I had to understand, participants stressed, that their scenarios were 'not unthinkable', meaning, 'realistic'. The more realistic, the stronger they could imagine that their port is prone to terrorism, and the more their counter-terrorist self would become meaningful in the War on Terror, resulting in a(nother) fight won in their everyday War on Meaninglessness. Some participants tried to convince me in comparison with their colleagues' scenarios, that *their* scenarios were the most ingenious and most likely to succeed. Some argued they would be better terrorists than terrorists themselves. For example, one security officer showed (off) his, according to him, advanced understanding of how to plan the perfect maritime terrorist attack. He did so, rather elaborately, by enriching his script with nuclear elements:

The phantom ship phenomenon occurs when a ship is being hijacked. Crew is thrown overboard, or murdered. The ship sets sail to an allied port, lets itself be reflagged, so you actually get a new ship, right? It receives a different name and gets different certificates. With those ships they'll look for cargo, and as soon as they have expensive cargo, they fall off the radar [figuratively – YE]. Then they arrive in another country, they reflag the ship again, offer cargo once more, and then that cargo is gone. This way a ship can appear everywhere with a different name and accept cargo. Well, if you combine this with nuclear material, in particular waste material that disappeared in recent years. A lot of nuclear waste material from hospitals, or what else is there… From X-ray equipment, just disappeared. At that point you got all the right ingredients to successfully sail-in a dirty bomb somewhere. Does it ring a bell, 'dirty bomb'? […] So you got a nuclear bomb, right? That's with the actual fission of atoms, radiating energy. But you also got the big bang with any type of explosive, and nuclear material wrapped around it. Your [explosive] effect might be way less, but you do cause a lot of radio-activity in the region, right? Well, you can enter New York, London, [this port]. If I were a terrorist… Airplanes. Okay, that's the ultimate terrorist attack, right? If you hijack a plane, you'll have more than enough publicity, but if that won't work, I'd take a step back, and I would try [the phantom ship method] (Security officer 10).

Some participants used existing movie scripts to relay maritime terrorist scenarios to me. In fact, one participant used dramatic footage from movies during the obligatory ISPS Code exercises and training:

September 11 [2001]. It was the day, when… well, something exceptional happened [in the world]. I always have a film clip here… the… You know it? *Speed 2*? Haha! It's always very graphic for the employees who start here, to get an example shown, right? They use the ship as a weapon (Security officer 9).

Afterwards, he showed me a short scene from *Speed 2: Cruise Control* to me (De Bont, 1997)[3] in which the main protagonists prevented a terrorist from letting a cruise ship hit an oil tanker. Instead of the tanker, they diverted the ship to ram a marina, bringing the vessel to a halt. The ramming, the panic and its damage done to the small town altogether, is what he used to create port security awareness amongst port employees and his security staff to be(come) vigilant against the dangers of maritime terrorism. By using existing film scenes, tangibility is given to the terrorist other, and therefore to their occupational self. Through entertaining Hollywood depictions of terrorism, the participants also *share* the terrorist other with each other and through each other's othering. This way they (are) communalise(d), giving meaning to their occupation in the port securityscape that, in reality, may have nothing to do with the War on Terror; a war though that becomes and remains (imaginatively) real for them through sharing their (movie-based) scenarios of terrorism.

As a matter of fact, creating maritime terrorist scenarios can be fun to do together with your colleagues, which indicates these discussions amongst some colleagues do take place once every while, and not just during and because of my ethnographic enquiry:

You can plot all kinds of boy's book scenarios. You discuss it with your colleagues once and a while. Outside of here, at sea, we got an anchorage, twelve miles outside the port. The biggest mammoth tankers of the world are moored there. There's a crew of twelve members on it. Well, it's a boy's book scenario, you know? To board it with a small rubber boat, take over the ship, sail in, straight through the marshes of the [river], and let the thing explode [in the port] (Port police officer 9).

In the absence of (mediatised) terrorism, they appear to wait in an occupational War on Meaninglessness, scripting terrorist scenarios together to retrieve meaning from, to subsequently (re)establish a meaningful, counter-terrorist and occupational self. However,

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[3] The following clip was used: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-Hk8gnvL_U.

in that port securityscape, they still have to perform their everyday tasks and routines, for which you cannot be *too* aware of terrorism and (overly) occupied with (scripting) terrorist scenarios, as a few participants cautioned me:

You shouldn't dwell on it when you drive here. You'll go insane. That's just the way it is. You just have to… Look, you choose for it. And well, everything has its pros and cons, in general. I'm here now for 12 years. I've experienced a couple of incidents, fires, leakages. Generally, it is secured to such an extent that things hardly go wrong (Security officer 11).

This last quote indicates that scripting terrorist scenarios is balanced as well. Therefore, on the one hand, *not* imagining the terrorist other in scripting maritime terrorist scenarios would confront the participants with surviving a War on Meaninglessness; on the other hand, too much scripting would drive them crazy, making them dysfunctional in their daily routine, which might very well affect their port security work.

Discussion

This study has offered an ethnographic account of occupational identity (re)establishment of operational police officers and security officers in two Northwest European ports: Rotterdam and Hamburg. In embedding the ethnographic material in the logic of othering (Said, 1979), three narratives about their occupational, counter-terrorist identity formation in the port securityscape have been laid bare.

First, the absent terrorist other in the port securityscape expresses that port police and security officers are confronted with their own absence in the War on Terror, whereas the ISPS Code, being archetypal War on Terror legislation, as is reflected by the post-9/11 rhetoric in its Preamble (IMO, 2003: 2), changed their working environment drastically. So,

whereas the War on Terror stage is set, their occupational self consists of feelings of exclusion and meaninglessness. Terrorists do not attack their port, whereas they need to 'assimilate the [terrorist] Other as the Other-looking-at-[them], and this project of assimilation includes an augmented recognition of [their] being-looked-at. In short, in order to maintain before [them] the Other's freedom which is looking at [them], [they] identify [themselves] totally with their being-looked-at' (Sartre, 2003: 387). Following from that Sartrean logic, without being looked at by the terrorist other, meaninglessness must be dealt with. Hence, in the Rotterdam and Hamburg port securityscapes, a War on Meaninglessness is fought and the only thing they kill is time. It has to do with the fact, they think, that the port is different from security realities in airports and particularly the urban environment where, participants feel, terrorism is (more) prevalent due to mediatised terrorist attacks in the past (Greenberg et al., 2006). It is their victimlessness that excludes them from 'a collective meaning of victimhood' (Garland, 2002: 12) of, in this case, terrorism. This non-existent victimhood in the port securityscapes of Rotterdam and Hamburg is thus existential: victimlessness equals meaninglessness. The port securityscape that provides them work and therefore an income, makes them simultaneously endure meaninglessness through the absence of terrorism. Hence, although they have been lured to the port securityscape to work and are duty-driven to protect vital sites of the global maritime trade, it does not mean it is a *meaningful* site for them as such.

Still, as the second narrative revolves around, their occupational, counter-terrorist self has to survive in the War on Meaninglessness, for which the terrorist other *must* be imagined (Baker-Beall, 2014). This is done primarily through mediatised political rhetoric and imagery (Eid and Karim, 2014), leading to stereotypes of terrorists being brainwashed with Islamic fundamentalist ideology whose sole purpose is to bring about death and destruction for publicity. Such publicity is something terrorists, however, will not get in the port, due to it lacking a Twin Tower-effect, participants thought. However, the port

with all its petrochemical sites is a sitting duck, some participants stressed, making it therefore surprising to them that their ports have not been attacked yet.

Consequently, as the third narrative revealed, they script their own maritime terrorist scenarios in which the ship is the main antagonist's weapon, and the port the victim; they retrieve imaginary victimhood, and therefore a (more) meaningful, counter-terrorist self. They even enjoy scripting terrorist scenarios and socialise through this co-creativity with each other, sharing their imaginary common (and communalising) enemy.

These narratives coming forward from absent terrorism in the port securityscapes of Rotterdam and Hamburg, let a paradox emerge, which unveils that the participants, as much as they are tasked to fight terrorism, they *need* the terrorist other too; the terrorist other is both an imaginary friend *and* enemy. Their counter-terrorist, occupational self is conflicted, because in desiring to become part of the War on Terror, they hunt for a higher goal in life, as much as—the participants themselves argued—'brainwashed', fundamentalist Muslims do to belong to a terrorist Jihad, fulfilling a higher goal in their life. Metaphorically, the terrorist other thus liberates their occupational self out of a daily War on Meaninglessness, making the terrorist other an existentialist freedom fighter *for* the participants (as well).

This may be a controversial element of the counter-terrorist identity exposed here. Still, explained existentially, it is possible to understand why those responsible for frontline EU border security in the port, are (perhaps even more than the general public) 'passionate about everything related to security and safety' (Bauman 2004: 94). Their search for occupational meaning through (port) security results from the fact that today, compared with earlier times, people in the (generally) peaceful Western world are (mostly) exempted from lethal conflicts, and instead struggle with meaninglessness (and boredom) (Prins 2007). Especially in Europe, being one of the safest places in the world, we can observe such 'an overall meaninglessness. […] we need 'a role" (ibid. 225). One of these roles—

that of a counter-terrorist self—is made possible through the terrorist other. Without that other, individuals, especially those responsible for War on Terror governance at the European borders of the Rotterdam and Hamburg ports may lose their meaningful occupational self, posing a possible bigger risk to them than terrorism itself. Another danger may be that, when reasoning from the narratives on imagining the most spectacular scenarios, amongst those responsible for port security there could be a (secret) wish for a terrorist attack to happen in the port in order to retrieve a (more) meaningful, counter-terrorist self. This, however, is a bold assumption about an individual's intention that requires further ethnographic exploration to evidence such a claim (if possible at all).

As a final note, this study is based on fieldwork done in two ports with specific port policing groups, making it impossible to generalise this study's key to other global ports in Northwest Europe (e.g. Le Havre in France or Antwerp in Belgium). Moreover, just because terrorism remains absent in the Rotterdam and Hamburg ports, it does not mean ports in other regions of the world have been as fortunate. There, operational port security and the occupational, counter-terrorist self may look different and could tell other stories. Hence, future ethnographic enquiries into port security are therefore recommended as to complement, contrast and criticise this study's findings.

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