Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

Navigating secrecy in security research

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Introduction: approaching a gate

How can researchers challenge, navigate and engage secrecy in their fieldwork, when they encounter confidential material, closed-off quarters or bureaucratic rebuffs? This is a particular challenge for researchers in the security field, which is by nature secretive and particularly difficult to access. In security research, classification and obfuscation are the rule. Operational information of security professionals is secret; private security institutions carefully shield their practices and protocols; the workings of security algorithms are most often proprietary and difficult to understand, even for those who work with them. Warzones are difficult and dangerous to access; military operations are by nature classified or subject to aggressive 'information management' (Campbell 2003). Moreover, gaining trust is a specific challenge for researchers *critical* of the operations of security practitioners.

Secrecy pertains to all domains of social life, but has particular pertinence in relation to security policies, practices and protocols. The challenge of secrecy is crucial to all phases of security research. When drafting a proposal or research design, researchers have to anticipate strategies of access, ethics and (data) security. Approval by supervisors, ethical boards, research councils and potential funders depends upon considerations of access and feasibility of the study. While in the field, researchers are continuously confronted with ethical and practical dilemmas around confidential and sensitive issues. Even after leaving the field when writing, issues will arise: what to leave out, what to disclose, how to anonymise and how to store information that is secretive, sensitive and confidential (Glasius et al. 2018: 111–115)?

This book addresses these questions (and many more), and offers the reader practical tips, guidance and best- and worst-case examples from experienced security researchers. We discuss the themes of this book through the sculpture *Gate* by Rob Ward, a sculptor and painter with a noteworthy interest in a "poetry of reflection" (Wood 2009: 4).[1] When looking at *Gate* (Figures 0.1 and 0.2), we see

two gates at right angles made out of stainless steel, creating a reflecting effect. At first glance, it seems as if one can see through the gate and enter what lies behind: people, buildings, the field. Yet from another vantage point it seems that the gates are actually closed. As the Cass Sculpture foundation describes *Gate*:

> This work . . . has a reflective surface that dematerialises its form and incorporates the viewer and landscape into its composition. This disorienting effect alters one's perceptual experience of the work whilst providing a dynamic vision of the viewer's surroundings. Gate's composition initially seems to deny its meaning, yet Gate provides access to one's surrounding environment by encouraging an activated consciousness of that environment.
>
> *(Cass Sculpture Foundation n.d.)*

Ward's *Gate* draws attention to at least three aspects of secrecy that shape critical security research: gaining access, barriers of secrecy, and the position of the researcher.

First, a gate typically grants or permits someone access. Individuals who facilitate research access are commonly called 'gatekeepers'. Before researchers set out to gather data however, it is often difficult to identify where the gate is, who function as gatekeepers and what they will find once access is gained. The presence and characteristics of the gate may be camouflaged by its surrounding context. The security field is constituted by numerous states, (non-)governmental organisations, companies and individuals who are configured transnationally (see Dijstelbloem and Pelizza, Chapter 2). In this dispersed and ambiguous context, it is often not immediately clear who could function as gatekeepers. Fieldsites are sometimes formally classified, and often obfuscated, such as asylum detention centres (see Belcher and Martin, Chapter 1) or security fairs (see Hoijtink, Chapter 8). Gaining access is relational; it is co-created between researcher and researched: a continuous and dynamic process that goes on even after leaving the field (Riese 2018). This complex, uncertain and obfuscated research terrain is one of the main themes of this volume.

But even when "passage through the mysterious gates remains impossible" (Wellman 2009: 220), like in *Gate*, we ask what *does* become possible if we take barriers of secrecy as objects of study? This is the second way in which the *Gate* sculpture speaks to the themes of this book: barriers of secrecy are not mere obstacles to overcome but are productive of research strategies and findings. Documenting and analysing where secrecies are, how they function and who is involved, can be revealing in itself. Like Ward's mirrored gate, our focus is not only on what is *behind* the gate, but also the way in which barriers of secrecy function as *reflective surfaces*[2] that create an activated consciousness of our constantly changing surrounding environment as well as our own presence and role in it (Wellman 2009: 216). Observing and mapping the gate itself, including our own reflections, becomes a productive and revealing exercise.

We do not consider closed doors, partial visibilities and obfuscation necessarily to constitute failed research. Instead of considering what has been lost or what stays

FIGURE 0.1 *Gate* by Rob Ward. Reprinted with permission of the artist.

out of the picture, we ask, what does mapping the contours of secrecy and obfuscation *add* to our analysis? By acknowledging that secrecy mediates our knowledge production and our perhaps ever partial visibilities, our aim is to present a fuller contextual picture of the reality of (research) practice. In their chapter about a formerly secret atomic weapons research facility, for example, William Walters and Alex Luscombe's aim is not necessarily to reveal the secret: "our task is not to

FIGURE 0.2 *Gate* by Rob Ward. Reprinted with permission of the artist.

uncover a singular, hidden, truth so much as to document and interpret the ways in which actors are reanimating the secret in the present" (see Walters and Luscombe, Chapter 3: 73). They show what unconventional respondents, such as ufologists and veterans, can add to our analysis of secrecy and security in practice.

Third, *Gate* draws attention to the position of the researcher.

> The observer is the real focus. If the observer changes his vantage point, if he walks around the sculpture, the perspective structure of the reflection changes as well. Sooner or later, he will see himself in the sculpture's surface and see himself as the instigator of that interplay of colors and light at the sculptures' surface that transcends the lifelessness of the material.
>
> *(Wellman 2009: 220)*

In provoking the relation of the viewer to the *Gate*, Ward depicts a situation similar to the one researchers experience in an often dispersed and ambiguous security field. He draws attention to positionality and to how our own vantage points may change in dialogue with a dynamic field. How do (critical) security researchers position themselves as part of the field and what kind of ethical dilemmas do they face? The security field is in constant flux, and like the representation of *Gate*: "it is circular, not linear, exploring reflective ideas in different contexts" (Email Rob Ward, 2018). In this volume, we develop ways to encircle, observe, document and analyse what secrecy does in practice.

This book introduction is structured as follows. In the next section 'Security and secrecy' we reflect on the challenge of secrecy in qualitative security research. Then, after formulating the 'Book objectives', we briefly elaborate on the title of the book in a 'Note on methods'. The last section outlines the book structure by discussing three avenues for navigating secrecy in security research that broadly map onto the three parts of the book: 'Secrecy complexities', 'Mapping secrecy' and 'Research secrets'.

Security and secrecy

Today, long-term, fieldwork-based, qualitative, ethnographic work is increasingly undertaken in the realm of (critical) security research. This is partly driven by new understandings of how and where securing and securitisation takes place. We see a reinvigorated attention to securing as a mundane, dispersed practice that involves citizens and mid-level professionals. Novel conceptualisations of securitisation as an iterative and dispersed *practice* (instead of a public, high-profile, singular speech act) require research design and methodological approaches that seek long-term immersion in the field (Bigo 2002; Hansen 2006; Huysmans 2006). These approaches seek to trace iterative frameworks over longer time horizons and across institutional boundaries (e.g. Bonelli and Ragazzi 2014). They entail a pragmatic and practice-centred perspective, which "involves focusing on how security works in practice and what it 'does' in different empirical contexts . . . and to understand when it is 'good' in a particular time and place" (Nyman 2016: 132). As Mark Salter has put it, security researchers need to immerse themselves into daily expert practice, "learning the daily language, plotting the struggles . . . understanding the deep well of common sense beliefs" (2013: 105). In addition, studies at the intersection between (critical) security studies and Science-and-Technology Studies (STS), redeploy reflexive, ethnographic methods, including participant observation, to new ends (Bourne et al. 2015; Jacobsen 2015; Suchman et al. 2017).

Doing qualitative and ethnographic fieldwork in the security domain, however, encounters very specific challenges of secrecy and confidentiality that largely remain under-theorised. More generally, in International Relations the long Realist tradition of studying security policies like nuclear deterrence reveals little about how challenges of secrecy and access were navigated (for example, but not exclusively, Gaddis 1982). However, the security field is conditioned and partitioned through classification, restriction, obfuscation and confidentiality. In the case of STS approaches, Walters has reflected on the differences between studying security and studying laboratory life: "How do we 'follow the actors' when they operate under cover of national security? How do we study political controversies when public disclosure is the exception and secrecy the norm?" (2014: 105). Security and policing researchers face what Randy Lippert, Kevin Walby and Blair Wilkinson (2015) have called "spins, stalls, or shutdowns", whereby officials delay and avoid research encounters, or create obstacles and obfuscations.

Furthermore, it is well known that secrecy holds a certain allure or seduction. It is often the researcher's expectation that there is a core of valuable truth at the

heart of the invisible or the forbidden. As Graham Jones has put it, it is tempting to equate "secrecy – and the difficulty of access – with the depth and authenticity of knowledge" (2014: 61). Remote locations, shielded laboratories, concealed documents, are easily inscribed with a particular value. However, we must be mindful of what Jacques Derrida called the "secrecy effect". As Derrida (1994: 245) notes, there is a certain "value" to the secret, which he called a "capital of the secret", that forms a basis for its authority. In this sense, secrecy's value entails something like a "magical reification" of the professional in possession of the secret.

We now have a vibrant literature, sometimes called Secrecy Studies (Birchall 2016a; Maret 2016), which problematises the 'secrecy effect' and which shows that secrecy is more than a barrier to be overcome (for example: Balmer 2012; Birchall 2011, 2016b; Bok 1983; Horn 2011; Kearns 2016; Rittberger and Goetz 2018; Thomas 2015; Rappert 2009, 2010, also this volume; Walters and Luscombe 2016). However, this literature (with some exceptions) says little about the specific *methodological* implications of encountering classification and confidentiality. On the other hand, we have a vibrant and growing literature on methods in International Relations, (critical) security studies and adjacent fields (Salter and Mutlu 2013; Aradau et al. 2015a; Montgomerie 2017; Klotz and Prakash 2008). Yet, in this literature, explicit reflection on navigating and negotiating secrecy is limited. One exception is Seantel Anais' (2013: 196) discussion of her careful assembly of a "living" archive of documents concerning the use of non-lethal weaponry in US cities, through a variety of strategies, including Freedom-of-Information requests.

Anthropology also offers important methodological starting points and a longer tradition of reflecting on questions of access, (in)visibility and ethical complicity in fieldsites (for example, Bourgois 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Scheper-Hughes 2004; Van Maanen 1981). While security researchers can certainly draw on the methodologies of anthropological fieldwork, most researchers in security studies do not strictly undertake ethnographies, nor are they necessarily trained to do so (Vrasti 2008). And even when they do, they need to reflect on the ways in which ethnographic literatures and lessons can be appropriated to security research (González 2012). As for example Erella Grassiani (Chapter 14) and Lieke Wissink (Chapter 17) show in this volume, the deployment of ethnographic methods in the highly secretive and sensitive security field entails its own specific set of methodological challenges and ethical dilemmas. Ethical dilemmas of security research are different than those in – for example – the observation of health practices (Cloatre 2013) or social movements (Riles 2001). Questions of confidentiality, anonymisation and secrecy play out in different ways in relation to qualitative immersion into security communities. As Fairlie Chappuis and Jana Krause show in this volume, the safety of researchers and their subjects requires special consideration, and has specific ethical implications.

Book objectives

This book offers scholars in Critical Security Studies, International Relations, International Political Sociology, Human Geography, Critical Military Studies, Border

Studies, and adjacent fields, their own set of tools and approaches to the question of researching secret domains. The aim of this book is to offer not just a conceptual reflection on the dynamics of secrecy, but also practical, hands-on methodological guidance for qualitative fieldwork in the security domain. Often, the hard work of gaining access, developing fieldwork strategies, navigating secrecy and adapting research design in light of classification are kept implicit. The starting point of this collection is that the challenges of secrecy need to be explicitly addressed in research design. Secrecies and confidentialities are not simply obstacles to overcome or barriers to break through: they can themselves become objects of study and analysis. As Clare Birchall put it: in addition to "recognizing the consequences of how certain secrets are managed by organizations, communities, technologies, and states" we should also "work *with* secrecy – seek inspiration from it as a methodological tool and techno-political tactic" (2016b: 153, emphasis in original). Secrecies pose substantial challenges to research ethics and integrity: what if secrecy prevents meaningful research access to fieldsites or interviewees? Perhaps even worse: what if the researcher becomes initiated into secrets that s/he cannot share, or that put her in a compromised ethical position?

The book offers a rich set of analyses of the challenges of secrecy in security research, and sets out practical ways to navigate, encircle and work with secrecy. Specifically, the book has two objectives. First, to creatively conceptualise, assess, discuss and analyse the challenges of secrecy in security research. The book conceptualises and unpacks the question of how secrecy operates, and how it relates to confidentiality and invisibility. How can secrecy be conceptualised and incorporated into a rigorous research design, that is attentive to the particular dynamics of (in)visibility in this sensitive research domain? The book sets out new ways of conceptualising secrecy in relation to fieldwork, by understanding secrecy as more than a barrier to be overcome. It shows how secrecy itself can be made *productive* to the analysis: mapping secrecies and sensitivities in the field can itself be revealing; navigating obfuscation is co-productive of research design and data. What do security practitioners themselves find to be most sensitive and why? The collected chapters develop tools and methods for navigating, mapping and *working with* secrecy as part of research objectives.

Second, to offer reflexive methodological tools and best-practice examples for students and researchers on ethically appropriate ways of navigating secrecy in security research. The book focuses explicitly on questions of access, trust and anonymity in qualitative security research, and suggests ways in which researchers can deal with these issues. As Johnna Montgomerie (2017: 13) puts it, we need to render explicit the "deliberative moments" of our research design and practices: the "choices, trade-offs and judgements" we make in research design and in research practice, especially when encountering challenges of confidentiality. Accordingly, the chapters here offer concrete guidance to students and researchers who are about to embark on secrecy-sensitive fieldwork. How, in practice, can the researcher approach security professionals and gain access for longer-term (or short-term) fieldwork? How can we build a research design that reflects on the

challenges of access and secrecy, and that does not merely regard the 'arrival story' as an irrelevant or amusing prelude to the real research (see Schwell, Chapter 4). How to immerse ourselves into communities of practice, learning from security practitioners without judgement, but without losing critical distance? The volume includes examples of best- and worst-practice experiences from researchers with a track record in qualitative security research. It provides students, PhD researchers and senior scholars with hands-on tips for working with secrecy, that balance professional demands for confidentiality with academic freedom and integrity.

Note on methods

Before we go on to clarify the book structure and sections, a brief note on the 'methods' that are part of the book's title. This book is part of an emerging tradition of increased attentiveness to methods and methodology in (critical) security studies and adjacent fields (Aradau et al. 2015a; Salter and Mutlu 2013). A distinction is commonly made between *methods* on the one hand – referring to all the tools, techniques and methods of analysis that are used to carry out research (i.e. interviews, participant observations, discourse analysis) – and *methodology* on the other: "the presuppositions about the 'reality status' (ontology) of the subject of study and about its 'knowability' (epistemology) that are enacted through research procedures of various sorts" (Haverland and Yanow 2012: 401). Contributions in this volume offer both methodological reflections, for example on relational ontology (see Dijstelbloem and Pelizza, Chapter 2), and methods such as "observing human-computer interaction" (see Bosma, Chapter 11). Considering the wide variety of contributions, our aim here is not to provide an umbrella methodological framework or approach to method(ology). Instead, we encouraged contributors to reflect on and make explicit their own methodological considerations and creative methods to navigate secrecy; whether they were developed and deployed as a "bridge between theory and method" or through "improvisation and *bricolage*" (Aradau et al. 2015b: 7).

As Claudia Aradau, Jef Huysmans, Andrew Neal and Nadine Voelkner (2015b: 4) have pointed out, the development of tools and methods in relation to *critical* approaches should resist the function of "hygiene" and "gate-keeping" that methodology sometimes exercises. The risk is that 'clean' and 'clear' research design erases the reflexive, iterative and associative capacities of critical research. At the same time, we find that it is important to develop methodological strategies and narratives that explain how research *was done* in practice (to funders, to colleagues, to journal editors and conference audiences). Here, we take our cue from Annemarie Mol's suggestions for "attending to method". Mol seeks to move beyond a binary approach to methods that *either* seeks to establish laws for research validity, *or* that questions the very possibility of such an aim. Instead, she proposes that we orient ourselves to methods as "interferences", and invites us to ask: "what is a good way of doing research, of going about the assembling and handling of material?" (Mol 2002: 157). The 'good' in this equation, for Mol (2002: 158), is not defined through "living up" to reality, but through "living with" reality. It involves recording and reflecting on, and coming to grips with, "what we are doing" when we go into the field. One way

of thinking about the 'good' in this context is the aim to achieve *rigour*, understood by Can E. Mutlu to mean "thoroughness and carefulness" in researcher design. For Mutlu, this entails explicitly "laying out steps taken in research, avenues pursued and avenues exhausted" (Mutlu, this volume, also Salter and Mutlu 2013).

The methodological stakes for the research fields mentioned above, then, is to develop their own methodological practices that do justice to their reflexive and heterodox nature, while being capable of helping researchers develop meaningful fieldwork strategies (while also satisfying grant-awarding committees!). The challenge is to enable methodological toolkits attuned to the open-endedness and the "happening" of social worlds (Lury and Wakeford 2012: 2). The goal is to develop thoughtful and plausible narratives of how research *is done*, and a reflexive vocabulary for navigating secrecy in particular. Accordingly, the chapters that follow provide countless examples, discussions and vignettes of what researchers *did* when they sought to "observe, make notes, count, recount, cut, paste, color, measure, slice [and] categorize" when researching confidential and secretive security practices (Mol 2002: 158).

Secrecy and methods: book structure

The book distinguishes *three avenues* for navigating secrecy in security research, broadly mapping onto the three parts of the book. The first part of the book is focused on reconceptualising secrecy as a complex practice and mode of power. This helps rethink traditional notions of 'access' and 'gatekeeping', through an attentiveness to the multiplicities of secrecy, confidentiality and obfuscation. The second part of the book discusses reflexive research approaches that seek to map secrecy itself through creative methods and *encircling*. Contributors enquire into the dynamics of secrecy and how to make these productive in their analysis. This part of the book also reflects on the secrecy challenges of technologies and offers approaches to studying expert, obfuscated practices like digital technology. The third and final part of the book sets out ways to develop balanced research strategies that combine confidentiality with academic freedom. Key here is to reflect on the ethical implications of studying secret practices, and the challenging dynamic between proximity and critical distance.

In practice, researchers will most likely use all of these strategies to some extent, and they are certainly not mutually exclusive. Also, some themes including confidentiality and research ethics are at work throughout all of these themes. Nevertheless, distinguishing these approaches helps clarify what is at stake in different ways of thinking about secrecy, and how we may carve out concrete methodological approaches and choices in this complex terrain.

Part 1: Secrecy complexities

The first part of this book – entitled 'Secrecy complexities' – offers a set of perspectives that moves beyond secrecy as something to be uncovered, in order to unpack secrecy as a complex dynamic of power. The sculpture *Gate* shown at the beginning of this introduction illustrates the complexity of secrecy. Secrecy and visibility are

not a simple binary (information is *either* secret *or* public), but entail complex trajectories and contestations. The sculpture *Gate* plays with these in/visibilities: with its confusing lay-out and reflecting surface, the viewer does not necessarily know which side s/he is on. How does one approach the *Gate* and how does that affect what becomes visible? Where is the threshold or passing point for entry? In this sense, *Gate* plays with and resists the seduction of secrecy and the promises of its uncovering. Accordingly, the contributions to Part 1 probe the value of the secret itself. Studying secrecy is not strictly about uncovering the kernel of the hidden, but is about analysing the play of power and authority that secrecies enable and produce (as exemplified in Box 0.1). Moreover, it is important, as researchers, to *resist* the 'magical reification' of the secret or the holder of secrets.

Building on recent work in (critical) security studies and International Relations (Van Veeren 2018; Walters 2014; Walters and D'Aoust 2015; Walters and Luscombe 2016), the chapters in Part 1 develop an understanding of secrecy as *relational*. In this approach, what becomes important to understand about the secret is less its hiding *per se*, and more the way in which it structures social relations, regulates communication, and distributes political power. The "choreography" of social positions revolving around the secret says something about the distribution of power, according to Eva Horn (2011: 109–110). As Brian Balmer (2012: 116) shows, moreover, secrecy is not a mere obstacle, but functions as an "active tool" that allows the "exercise of spatial-epistemic power". For example, even if documents and information are not strictly secret, they can be subject to limited circulation and regulated visibility, sometimes even aggressive information management by state or private actors. The analysis of such spatial-epistemic power and secrecy's "enactment, meanings and effects" (Balmer 2012: 2), is at least as important as the enquiry into secret materials itself.

A common response to secrecies is to understand the hidden as intentionally concealed, and "at least in principle, knowable" (Van Veeren 2018: 197). Subsequently, research may seek to *reveal* secretive practices, information or sites. Sam Raphael, Crofton Black, Ruth Blakeley and Steve Kostas (2016) for instance, triangulate logistical data (flight records) with other sources to uncover secret prisons and torture practices by the CIA. Torin Monahan and Jill Fisher, by comparison, set out nine strategies for gaining access to secretive organisations, ranging from the relatively familiar avenues of building trust and demonstrating legitimacy, to methods with 'surprise' effect, like cold calling and "making barely announced visits" (2015: 722). Together, these nine strategies offer a very helpful guide to the security researcher, but they remain quite firmly focused on the secret as something that needs to be uncovered or revealed. In her ethnographic research into organ-trafficking, Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2004: 37) explicitly attempts to "pierce the secrecy surrounding organ transplantation and to 'make public' . . . practices regarding the harvesting, selling and distribution of human organs and tissues". Some researchers even make the case for *covert research* (Calvey 2008), for example by entering a field under false pretences, or by using one's social position or job as fieldwork without asking consent (Holdaway 1982). While recognising the many concerns over covert research, for example, Scheper-Hughes (2004: 45) did so anyway: "how else, except in disguise,

could I learn of the hidden suffering of an invisible, silenced and institutionalized population..?". Although important findings may arise from covert research, in this collection we do not encourage students to undertake undercover research. Not only because of ethical and safety considerations, but also because we consider the secret not purely as something to be uncovered or overcome.

BOX 0.1 WHEN IS A SECRET SECRET?

In 2006, the *New York Times* revealed the existence of a secret datamining programme that used financial transactions data for counter-terrorism. This programme – the Terrorism Financing Tracking Programme (TFTP) – had been put in place immediately after the 9/11 attacks and uses wire transfer data from the Belgian-based SWIFT company to map suspect financial networks at the US Treasury. The *NYT* revelation was strongly condemned by US authorities, which blamed the newspaper for jeopardising national security.

However important that *NYT* publication was, the existence of the Terrorism Financing Tracking Programme wasn't really *secret* to begin with, and the revelation did not really *reveal*. To some extent, as we document elsewhere, the programme was not really secret because its existence had been known to an ever-wider circle of insiders, including the European Central Bank and other professionals. In a different perspective, the *NYT* article did not really *reveal*, because even if it brought the existence of the programme to public attention, it raised more questions than it answered, especially concerning the data-analytics at work in the programme, and the type of interventions to which it could concretely lead. It would take another five years before concrete case examples were made public, and even then they were cryptic and lacking in detail.

The point here is not to belittle the importance of the *NYT* publication (which did, in fact, lead to an important transatlantic discussion concerning this data-led security programme and its implications for privacy). Rather, the point is to problematise what Claire Birchall (drawing on Jodi Dean) calls the *'drama' of concealment and revelation*, which is how we often think about security secrecy. Instead of a moment of revelation, we have suggested that it is more useful to think of the *NYT* publication as one moment in a longer *contested knowledge practice* (de Goede and Wesseling 2017). Secrecy and (de)classification can be more ad hoc and controversy-driven than the formal classification rules would lead to suggest (also Balmer 2012). Contested knowledge practices are political and material. Secrecy/publicity dynamics play an important role in regulating knowledge, structuring the field of legitimate speakers, and influencing the direction and themes for public debate. In the case of the TFTP, the contestation over its openness or secrecy has to some extent displaced substantive discussion concerning its legitimacy and effectiveness.

However, if secrecy is complex, non-binary, ad hoc, and related to obfuscation and evasion (as much as formal classification), new methodological approaches are necessary. Such approaches are laid out in the contributions to Section I on 'Secrecy, silence and obfuscation'. First, as Oliver Belcher and Lauren Martin show, deliberate strategies of what Peter Galison (2004) called "removing knowledge" are not always the main challenge to researchers. More important than formal classification, in many cases, are situations where information is restricted, sensitive or limited (also Curtin 2014). Chapter 1 shows how secrecies can operate through bureaucratic obfuscation, silences and delays in replying to research requests (also Belcher and Martin 2013). In this sense, secrecy itself offers insights into the (dis)functioning of the state. Belcher and Martin show how they grappled with the methodological challenges of secrecy in their research on detention centres and military practices. They offer lucid, practical advice on how to work with the grey area of off-the-record conversations and how to undertake Freedom of Information requests.

For Huub Dijstelbloem and Annalisa Pelizza in Chapter 2, the 'real secret' is the "nature of the state", and they analyse how research is co-constitutive of how the state appears in view. Dijstelbloem and Pelizza offer the notions of performativity and immanence to conceptualise the in/visibility of state practices. If research starts from the premise that "the study of states, borders and infrastructures starts in the middle of things without having a view from above", Dijstelbloem and Pelizza offer concrete examples and tools to develop what they call an "oligoptic" analysis of state practices in relation to migration control.

In Chapter 3, William Walters and Alex Luscombe introduce the notion of "post-secrecy" to conceptualise places or practices that are no longer strictly secret, but the appearance of which is still regulated through partial in/visibilities, rumours, "fuzziness and ambiguity". Their study of former UK weapons testing site Orford Ness offers a compelling account of a place haunted by secrecy, which profoundly problematises the secrecy/transparency binary. It also offers a rich methodological toolkit of researching postsecrecy, including joining guided tours, immersion in archives, and drawing upon the unexpected (and often dismissed) knowledge of ufologists.

Section II, called 'Access, confidentiality and trust', offers creative and self-reflexive ways of gaining access and working with confidentiality. As Didier Fassin's ethnography of urban, street-level policing in Paris also shows, fieldwork access is not so much a clear moment, but is precariously negotiated through ongoing "critical dialogue" (2013: 19). How can we include the moments where 'access' is denied or difficult, and let them be illustrative for the way in which security is constituted? As Alexandra Schwell discusses in Chapter 4, the 'arrival story' is a classic trope in ethnographic literatures. Too often, however, the arrival story remains an anecdotal prelude to the 'real' research analysis; gaining access is reduced to an initial barrier to be overcome before the research process can commence. Far less often do we reflect on the ways in which our modes and practices of access reflect back on our research questions and findings themselves.

By comparison, in Chapter 5 Jonathan Luke Austin reflects on the challenging process of accessing the 'lifeworlds' of perpetrators of torture, and the complex

responsibilities and ethics it involves. Austin discusses how he redeployed the ethnographic method of 'deep hanging out' in his research to create proximity to possible interviewees. He suggests creative ways of engendering conversation on sensitive topics such as torture, including the use of re-enactment, because 'showing' might sometimes be easier for interviewees than 'telling', and it allows the researcher the "opportunity to observe the facial expressions, verbal communications, emotional states". Proximity with perpetrators of extreme violence moreover raises poignant questions concerning ethics and the researchers' positioning, that Austin discusses.

In Chapter 6, Fairlie Chappuis and Jana Krause give a frank account of their fieldwork experiences in dangerous conflict and post-conflict settings. They draw on their research and fieldwork experiences in Burundi, Liberia, Indonesia, Nigeria, Myanmar, and South Sudan to show how local contexts can shape the research process in unexpected ways. The resources and bureaucratic capacities of local institutions as well as the presence of other actors such as "human rights investigators and activists, journalists, and spies" present opportunities as well as ethical challenges. Importantly, their chapter highlights the importance of the safety of researcher and respondents, by discussing many practical considerations and tips.

Part 2: Mapping secrecy

In the second part of the book, called 'Mapping secrecy', we explore how we can make the barriers of secrecy and the contours of obfuscation, productive in our analysis. The sculpture *Gate* generates a dynamic vision of the barrier to entry as well as its surroundings. Every time the observer changes position, *Gate* becomes different. From one angle it is closed, yet from another angle entry seems possible and permitted. Sometimes, one can glimpse (a snippet) of what lies behind the gate, although its context may remain unclear. By making *Gate* out of a reflective surface it was the sculptor's intention to create an activated consciousness of the viewer's environment. As such, *Gate* does not symbolise that which is beyond vision, but emphasises what we *do* see.

Contributions to 'Mapping secrecy' draw from and contribute to a growing body of literature on secrecy that encourages us to "experimen[t] with and explor[e] the productive possibilities of secrecy, fog, obfuscation" (Birchall 2016b: 161). It can be revealing in itself to map and analyse secrecy, obfuscation and the blurry boundaries of the visible and invisible. In such an approach, mapping the dynamics of openness and closure becomes part of the research: how are secrecy controversies productive of the ways in which security phenomena become known (e.g. De Goede and Wesseling 2017)? Which practices, protocols and information are security professionals willing to share, and which do they close off, and why? Where are lines of visibility and access (deliberately or unwittingly) drawn? Previous research has shown that the issues that professionals find sensitive are not always the most interesting issues from a research point of view. The barriers of secrecy that governmental institutions put up can, moreover, be instructive in themselves (Anais 2013: 197; Bryman 2012: 151).

In addition, secrecy may arise less from a deliberate hiding or classification, and more from the need for specialised knowledge or expertise to decipher practices or discourses (Van Veeren 2018). Sometimes, the secret is kept in public. Michael Taussig (1999: 5) coined the term 'public secret' to denote "that which is generally known, but cannot be articulated". Often practices are not necessarily secret, but are not readily analysable for other reasons; they could be too overwhelming in volume, too distant, foreign, or too complicated to understand in the often limited time available for the research project. Accordingly, contributions to Part 2 of the book engage with the challenge of understanding the role and inner workings of complex security technologies. All kinds of security practices, from border security, to drone warfare, to "securing with algorithms", are technology-led in ways that are opaque to researches and practitioners alike (e.g. Amoore and Raley 2017; Bourne et al. 2015). In what ways do technologies require specialised knowledge to design, implement, use, and understand them and what does this mean for our knowledge production about security decision-making and practices?

Contributions in Section III, called 'Reflexive methodologies', make dynamic encounters with secrecy a primary object of analysis. Rather than strictly seeking access, these contributions start thinking about ways of *encircling* secret sites and obfuscated practices. The perspective on secrecy as a dynamic practice and a mode of power – as developed in this introduction and Part 1 of the book – directs us to creative methodological approaches that do not so much seek to break through, but that advocate a particular *encircling*. Encircling entails a lateral, multipronged, creative, iterative approaching of secret sites, confidential materials and classified practices. It is less focused on uncovering the *kernel* of the secret, than it is on analysing the mundane lifeworlds of security practices and practitioners that are powerfully structured through codes and rites of secrecy. The chapters show in different ways how an enhanced understanding of the ways in which secrecy mediates both research and the topic under investigation, can be revealing in unexpected ways. How can researchers move beyond the binary of visibility and invisibility and navigate and analyse these blurry boundaries? How can we describe and analyse objects and terrains that are not directly visible for multiple reasons?

Researchers might experience different affective states in relation to secrecy "ranging from guilty excitement of penetration to intense paranoia about the consequences of approaching or disclosing secrets" (Jones 2014: 61). Although these experiences may have a profound effect on research and researchers, they are often not explicitly addressed. A reflexive attitude generates awareness for the ways in which secrets shape our own knowledge production, and how our methods may affect our respondents. Aradau and colleagues (2015b: 3) have urged us to "expand the question of reflexivity to include an analysis of the effects that methods as practices have". Rightfully, they emphasise that methods are practices. We *do* methods. They are embodied. They may "enact" identities (ibid.). And, "methods circulate through other social spaces" than the academic field. Importantly, in this expanded notion of reflexivity, they ask: "how does the practice of the method *constitute* us as researchers, when we think about methods, learn methods, discuss methods, and

most importantly, use methods?" (Aradau et al. 2015b: 6). For security researchers then, secrecy is not simply a hurdle to overcome in the first phase of the 'research design', but asks for a continual reflexive attitude before, during and after fieldwork.

Contributions to this section explore what secrecy *adds* to our conception of security practices. In Chapter 7, Brian Rappert explores how "what is *not* in our analysis" can become a productive aspect of our research, by outlining experimental forms of writing that may help us to "skillfully write *with* and not just *about* secrecy". Drawing from his own research into disarmament and arms control communities, he offers strategies to "exemplify the interplay of disclosure and concealment". Contributors also draw attention to the way in which barriers of secrecy may act as reflective surfaces that mirror one's own role in the field. In Chapter 8, Marijn Hoijtink draws on feminist literature to offer a reflective discussion of "gender-related opportunities and pitfalls associated with research on security and secrecy". Using generous examples from her research on security technology and corporate actors in European security, she shows how our positionality may provide or deny access to the field, but that we also bring our own background and assumptions to the field. She advocates for "a commitment to openness in research encounters" in security contexts.

In probing what security is and where we might *see* security, in Chapter 9 Jonna Nyman "challenges the ongoing link between security and secrecy". Drawing on her ethnographic fieldwork on the everyday security landscapes of Chinese security politics, she provides methodological guidance and practical tips for researchers who want to use visual ethnographic methods. She combined auto-photography and photo-elicitation to explore how security is "lived" by ordinary Chinese citizens; what security means to them; what they deem relevant; and how it intersects with their daily life. By showing how our own knowledge production is mediated through secrecy and obfuscation – including our own 'secret' assumptions and inclinations – we do not mean to say that is impossible to conduct objective research. Rather, by explicating these elements, we aim to produce a more realistic research account.

In Section IV, called 'Ethnographies of technologies', contributors explore strategies to map the dynamics of secrecy inherent to complex digital security technologies. Contributions in this section offer researchers methodological guidance and practical tips on how to understand and account for the increasing role of technologies in effecting judgements and decisions in the security realm. Such technologies are sometimes classified (as in proprietary algorithms), but they can also be obfuscated in multiple ways. The sheer technical knowledge required to understand their functioning renders them particularly secretive. Digital technologies often entail what Elspeth Van Veeren has called "invisibility as inexpertise" (2018: 197). Researching such invisibilities may require developing technical knowledge and expertise, and sometimes also relies on "identifying the traces of things" (Van Veeren 2018: 198). How can we account for the role of complex security technologies without 'drowning' in technical details? Given that technologies assemble many different ideas and objects, how do we decide which part of the technology to

describe or leave out? How do we describe the complex technical characteristics of security technologies and relate them to their wider socio-political context? How could we complement ethnographic approaches with novel methods to observe technology? And, how do we write about technologies to a non-specialised audience in a way that is analytical and not purely descriptive?

In Chapter 10, Till Straube shows how the social sciences and popular media have often mobilised the notion of the black box to call attention to the opacity of digital technologies and algorithms. Through a hypothetical analysis of the racial bias exhibited by face-detecting algorithms, he illustrates and explores practical and conceptual challenges of 'opening the black box of algorithmic devices'. Highlighting a "set of real-life roadblocks that algorithm studies are prone to", he offers researchers in social sciences at all levels of expertise, specialised methods to study digital devices. His analysis shows that it is crucial to direct our attention to include the socio-technical characteristics of digital devices, as politics are *inscribed* into security technologies (Akrich and Latour 1992). Studying digital security technologies may help to map "the less immediately visible violences that see war spilling over into the spaces of everyday life" (Amoore and De Goede 2014: 513). In Chapter 11, Esmé Bosma draws on her research into counter-terrorism financing practices by banks to offer a multi-sited ethnographic approach to study digital security technologies. Based on her experiences of analysing the financial transaction monitoring systems used to filter and monitor unusual financial activity and suspicious transactions, she offers two methodological starting points centred around "sites of experimentation": to follow technology from design to use and to observe human-computer interaction.

Whereas Straube and Bosma mainly focus on digital security technologies, Sarah Hughes and Philip Garnett in Chapter 12 develop a broader understanding of 'technology' as a mode of governing that includes "multiple technologies by which state actors work to influence a narrative surrounding an event or process". They show how researching technologies is not only a matter of technical expertise. In their analysis of the court-martial of Chelsea Manning, they offer multiple ethnographic methods to critically analyse "emergent technologies of state control". In addition, they consider the ethical, practical and technological challenges of working with leaked material. Contributions in Part 2, then, offer ways to make secrecy productive to our analysis before, during and after our data collection.

Part 3: Research secrets

Part 3 of the book, called 'Research secrets', reflects back on the role of the researcher and the things in our own research practice that – while perhaps not strictly secret – often remain unsaid or at the very least under-articulated. Returning to consider the sculpture *Gate*, the researcher is confronted with the possibility of a prescribed and conditional access, but also with an image of themselves. In encountering *Gate*, the researcher is asked to consider their own position and where they stand in relation to the field and in relation to what can and cannot

be seen. Where the researcher stands in relation to *Gate* determines not only how the researcher encounters it, but also what is reflected back, making visible the researcher's own role, processes, and position. *Gate* makes it possible to see ourselves as active and present agents and raises further questions about our roles as critical security researchers. These questions include our impact on the field; if and how we engage in advocacy and critique; and ethical concerns around confidentiality and academic integrity.

Thinking about 'research secrets' generates attentiveness to the things we do not often make explicit in our research processes when working with, around, and through secrecy. These processes include how we negotiate issues of ethics and academic integrity, and the choices we make when engaging in advocacy or crafting critique. These make up a central part of our research practice, and yet they remain mostly hidden or silenced in our writing that focuses on research results. As one of us shows in Chapter 15 (de Goede) on 'secrecy vignettes', these are the stories of our research experiences we may 'close the gate on', that we often do not tell, and the secrets we construct about and around our own research. This connects to recent literatures that address these silences, or moments of unease, and their effects on the research process from fieldwork to writing that take seriously the ethical and emotional challenges of engaging challenging security fields (Eriksson Baaz et al. 2018).

One paradoxical consequence of the way that secrecy plays out in security research, is that some fieldsites may become overexposed, as others remain inaccessible. The *Gate* offers the possibility for access, but this can result in greater numbers of researchers visiting the *Gate*. How other researchers behave at the *Gate* can alter the environment: maybe these other researchers (unintentionally) damage the Gate or the environment around it. Issues of accessibility, including location, security, infrastructures capable of supporting a community of researchers including hotels, restaurants and communication networks, and the presence of sympathetic gatekeepers, all lead to certain places and people becoming a focus of research. The number of other researchers present alters the *Gate*'s accessibility, as more and more people become reflected, altering what can and cannot be seen. As Tom Clark (2008) has argued in relation to such sites of 'over-research', as certain places and communities become the subject of more and more research, we not only limit the topics of research, but participants and researchers themselves become increasingly sceptical of research's potential to offer critique and to advocate for meaningful social change (Box 0.2).

BOX 0.2 OVER-RESEARCH AND 'HOT' FIELD SITES

To give an example, following the civil war in Syria and the subsequent 'refugee crisis', Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan became a locus for research. In discussing the infrastructures of over-research Elisa Pascucci has shown how due

to its location in "one of the most politically stable and accessible (to Western visitors) countries in the Middle East, Jordan, Za'atari has also become one of the main hubs for academic researchers looking for 'data'" (2017: 249). An "unmanageable number of research projects" focused on Za'atari and Syrian refugees led to reports of 'research fatigue' amongst humanitarian organisations acting as informal research gatekeepers but officially charged with assisting and managing the Syrian refugee community. This research fatigue, in turn, led to the subsequent creation of a coordination structure designed to screen research projects "on the basis of operational needs and in the best interest of the refugee population" (Ahmadzadeh et al., quoted in Pascucci, 2017: 249).

Here we see the dynamic relations of secrecy and access in structuring methodological choices and ultimately knowledge production itself. Issues of secrecy and access lead, in certain instances, to particular places and populations becoming over-researched, which can then lead to the (re)production of secrecy through the imposition of restricted access and demands for particular types of knowledge production by various gatekeepers. Importantly in discussing the issues of over-research, Pascucci stresses the constitutive role of research infrastructures. In her case the research infrastructure is constituted by the presence of humanitarian actors who play an important role in facilitating access to the field, even when they are not the subjects of the research. Their presence in many instances also makes research in the field practically possible, from the presence of suitable transport networks and accommodation, something Pascucci calls "safe transnational mobility channels".

Amongst other scholars reflecting on 'hot' research sites, Katerina Rozakou has reflected on her engagement with Moria the EU's migrant processing 'Hotspot' on the Greek island of Lesvos (2017). In reflecting on the impacts of over-research and our complicit role in the production of such she considers how she is seen by the Hotspot manager as "just 'another' researcher, similar to the detested journalists who crave for an easily digested account and a simplified image" (Rozakou, 2017). Being seen as 'just another researcher' craving an 'easily digested account' or a 'simplified image' calls into question the (un)productive nature or the potential (un)productive nature of our work in the eyes of the people we curate our research with. Issues of accessibility, including location, security, infrastructures capable of supporting a community of researchers including hotels, restaurants, and communication networks and the presence of sympathetic gatekeepers, all lead to certain places and people becoming a focus of research.

In Section V, 'Critique and advocacy', contributions engage with differing notions of when, how or if to speak out, and how to engage in critique amid the dynamics of secrecy. Much security research is marked by its ambition to raise critical questions about practices of securing, and to challenge the ways in which

societal issues become securitised. In security studies there have long been debates and divisions over whether security is positive or negative, what 'ethical security studies' entails, and about what it means to study security from a 'critical' perspective (Austin et al. 2019; Aradau et al. 2015a; Nyman and Burke 2016; Salter and Mutlu 2013). A "pragmatic practice-centered approach" recognises that "there is no one 'truth' and so no 'correct' approach to critique or ethics" in 'critical' or 'Critical' security research (Nyman 2016: 138–139). Secrecy is a factor in our ability to act as critical observers of the world(s) we encounter, working to structure what can and cannot be said, or how we frame our interventions. Working with secrecy raises questions for advocacy as well as questions about the balance between observation and engagement including going beyond important questions about introducing classified knowledge into the public domain, or when – if ever – to act as a whistleblower.

When dealing with 'secret' or sensitive data, researchers have to consider a range of factors that relate to their subject position relative to their research subject(s) and their own agency or role in being a vehicle for disclosure. Researchers have to continuously navigate and reassess the methods and ethics of disclosure. We have to decide *what* we reveal and *how* in accordance with our particular relationship to both the person and/or organisation who has shared information with us, or the particular subject matter. Scholars researching security have differential subject positions vis-à-vis their research subjects. In some instances, we may be 'studying up' and thus reliant on powerful others for research access; in other instances the relationship may be a more equal one between professionals who share professional interests if not professions; while at other times researchers may find themselves in positions of authority, both in terms of their academic expertise but also in terms of the knowledge they possess about other people's lives. Here ethical processes of disclosure or counsel help to shape what we choose to say and how we choose to say it. Telling peoples' stories crafts the researcher into a powerful subject especially when those stories involve processes of revelation and curation. Additionally, researchers have to think carefully about using information that may have negative consequences on people's lives.

Section V offers practical, reflective accounts of how and why researchers have chosen to make specific decisions regarding advocacy and critique. Researchers reflect on their own positions in their particular research field and show how political affiliations, worldviews, and power relations influence how, when and if they choose to practice advocacy and critique. Researchers may feel the need to both speak-out on particular issues, as experts with particular knowledge, while maintaining access to particular security domains for themselves and others. However, as Anna Stavrianakis also shows in Chapter 13, the role of critic is not always a comfortable one, or a role researchers give themselves. It is also how we are viewed by our interlocutors. While it is important to acknowledge that identities are multifaceted and "exist in constant flux" (Dingli 2015: 729), the role of expertise in academia and beyond may be gendered and/or racialised (see Hoijtink, Chapter 8). We have been trained to engage in critique and the more experienced

amongst us have the CV and publications to show that our peers have judged us worthy of playing such a role. This also makes us useful for articulating ideas, pushing boundaries, and making arguments that our research subjects working in the field of security (broadly defined) cannot engage in, for reasons of secrecy yes, but also institutional politics, and professional discretion. This, however, leads to further questions of where our analysis and scholarly independence ends, and the wishes of our interlocutors to engage in their own form of advocacy or critique begins. As such, the balance between publicly engaged academia that informs advocacy efforts and offers critique, and the need for integrity around transparency and confidentiality is highly context and researcher specific.

Stavrianakis makes clear in Chapter 13 that researching the UK arms trade politicised her. She sets out the multi-method approach with which she studies the UK arms trade. Noting that learning about the secretive world of arms trading made her 'angry' about the way it was justified, she was then confronted with questions concerning whether and how to engage politically. Stavrianakis reluctantly became invested in the UK 'impact agenda' by speaking out as a public expert on these issues, and her chapter discusses the "challenges of moving between scholarship and activism". Issues of critique and efforts at advocacy can also drive us to research those we oppose, as Erella Grassiani shows in Chapter 14. Grassiani explores ways of navigating this relationship in a way that enables her to engage in both advocacy and critique, while being mindful of her ethical commitment to do no harm to her research subjects. She uses the anthropological idea of the 'trickster' to unsettle the focus on empathy with research subjects common in ethnography. Using the approach of the trickster helps Grassiani highlight the ambivalence of researching those to whom you have an ethical obligation to *do no harm* but with whom you might politically and ethically disagree. In contrast to studying those we oppose, close research relationships with research respondents can lead to friendships that, while facilitating and smoothing our access to the field, can make our role as *critical* security scholars more difficult. In Chapter 15, Marieke de Goede also engages the themes of critique and entanglement, albeit from a very different angle. Chapter 15 explores the use and usefulness of auto-ethnographic 'vignettes' to give secrecy a place in academic writing. It explores the ways in which vignettes can broaden the register of academic voice, to reflect on fieldwork dilemmas and discomforts, and on the complex entanglements between researcher and researched that participant-observation produces.

BOX 0.3 BALANCING CONSENT, CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN PRACTICE

In discussing the problems researchers face in balancing issues of consent, confidentiality and academic integrity we draw on our own recent experiences in finalising a grant agreement with the European Union for a multi-country,

multi-sited, multi-researcher, multi-language and multi-method project. In this instance, secrecy became visible and a clear methodological and ethical *challenge* (as opposed to an issue of concern written into the initial grant proposal) when in finalising the ethics section for approval from the European Commission we were expected to balance the need to gain consent from all those involved in the research with the need for confidentiality, the safety of our data and research respondents and the academic integrity demands of open access to our data. This was and remains a Gordian knot.

First, there was no way we could promise to gain the active consent, in the shape of a signed form, from every single person encountered in the process of research that will involve participant observation in places, such as the Hotspots on the Greek islands or informal migrant settlements in Ethiopia, with not only hundreds of people present, but additionally people with multiple different languages and some illiteracy. Second, the need for confidentiality and the safety of our research respondents is actively in tension with the need for active consent and open access research results required under academic integrity guidelines. The European Union requires our research data to be stored on a repository and to be available to other researchers. Meanwhile, our research project involves vulnerable groups of people, refugees, victims of torture, political dissidents, and (potentially unknown to us) unaccompanied minors; to ask for and record their consent has the potential to risk their safety in an environment of heightened tensions and physical violence between different groups.

Furthermore, allowing potentially anyone access to this data brings further potential harm to our research subjects. In addition, the call for a radical academic transparency that underpins the sharing of research data highlights an inability of funding councils to consider the nature of many ethnographic-style data collection methods. When issues of reporting on possible human rights abuses and criminality [when most of our vulnerable research respondents have been technically criminalised as irregular migrants] are thrown into the mix the exercise becomes even more fraught with contradictions.

Here the idea of a signed consent form alongside the archiving of data in an open access repository appears as a material embodiment and performance of our academic integrity. They provide the research team with a way of demonstrating our commitment to an ethical system supposedly committed to doing no harm and an academic system committed to transparency and accountability in knowledge production. However, are these *ex ante* systems capable of producing such ethical research or upholding academic integrity on their own?

Section VI, 'Research ethics in practice', addresses ethical considerations that can create conflicting demands for researchers. Encountering and navigating secrecy

in research inevitably raises important questions of ethics and research integrity. The need for active consent can challenge our responsibility to *do no harm*. Ethical review increasingly takes place *ex-ante* requiring all ethical issues to have been anticipated and prepared for in advance. Ethical reviews can sometimes function more as university risk management exercises, rather than reflexive processes of ethics in practice (e.g. Robinson 2011). Meanwhile, an increasing requirement for transparency and open access data repositories required under well-meaning academic integrity efforts creates further complications (see Box 0.3).

Contributions to Section VI reflect explicitly on the ethical questions accompanying qualitative security research. Researchers have to balance integrity, that is the ability to show the strength of your research foundation, with considerations around anonymity and confidentiality that are not only driven by research ethics but sometimes legal concerns. For instance, one of the contributors to this edited volume has had to negotiate how much detail they can reveal about their fieldsite and research respondents in concert with their academic institution that is fearful of possible legal repercussions.

As is made clear throughout this volume, security research is an active, embodied and engaged process that often asks difficult personal and ethical questions of researchers as they attempt to access field sites. Researchers find themselves encountering, uncovering and working with highly sensitive data such as policing strategies (see Amicelle, Badrudin and Tanner, Chapter 16) or asylum requests (see Wissink, Chapter 17). What types of decisions do researchers make regarding the selection and access to field sites in their research? How do they choose to access the site (or not) or use such data (or not)? How do they maintain confidentiality of fieldnotes (see Nyman, this volume), and balance the need to account for the validity of their data with other aspects of academic integrity related to confidentiality? And importantly, how do researchers account for the validity and rigour of their data when such data and its sources are confidential or of a sensitive nature?

If we appear to have more questions that definitive answers, this is because research is an active process as many of the contributions in Section VI and the volume as a whole make clear. For example, there is a difference between 'planned ethics' written in to research design and grant proposals and 'ethics in practice'. But as Anthony Amicelle, Marie Badrudin and Samuel Tanner as well as Lieke Wissink stress (in Chapters 16 and 17), we should consider not only ethics *in* practice but also ethics *as* practice. Ethics or ethical practice is not something that can be simply written into a form or approved by an ethics committee although these encounters often offer useful ways to start 'thinking' ethics. All stages of the research process require continuous (ethical) reflection that asks us to think across a range of temporalities, drawing on both past and present experiences but also asking us to imagine future possibilities.

Finally, Section VI asks what happens to issues of consent and confidentiality when what is being studied as an important actor in the security field with the capacity to affect change is not a human agent capable of consent, active or

otherwise? As contributions to this volume make clear (see, for example, Bosma, Chapter 11 and Straube, Chapter 10), scholars of security increasingly research the non-human agents of security such as algorithms, databases, and infrastructures that do very real work in the world alongside and in conjunction with their designers, coders, and users (e.g. Amoore and Raley 2017; Pallister-Wilkins 2018; Read et al. 2016). What ethical responsibilities do researchers have in relation to these security actors in their work? Work on security infrastructures such as border technologies – surveillance systems, walls, checkpoints, gates – for example, are focused on non-human actors, yet humans still interact with and use these infrastructures in relational ways meaning that work detailing particular aspects of these infrastructures can have very real human impacts. It is not possible in these instances to gain the consent of the people who are affected by and encounter these (border) technologies, e.g. the irregular migrants made visible to search and rescue regimes by surveillance systems at sea even if research into these systems has the capacity to alter the security field (Dijstelbloem et al. 2017). In Chapter 17, Wissink discusses following deportation files as a significant actor containing important information about migrants. In Wissink's research the file is a taxonomic system materially and digitally representing individuals neither of whom – the file, or the individual categorised and codified in the file – can consent to being studied. In such circumstances what are our ethical responsibilities when we are not researching people directly but indirectly through the devices of security?

In 'Research secrets' researchers offer personal reflections on their own decision-making processes relating to the handling of confidential and sensitive research information. They show how decisions are highly context specific and related to particular aspects and issues within the security domain such as the relative power of research subjects. As the contributions show, it matters what type of data is being made visible or invisible, who and what the subjects of this data are as well as the intended audience.

Concluding

The sections that follow discuss three avenues for navigating secrecy in security research. The first part reconceptualises secrecy as a complex practice and mode of power and helps think through the methodological implications of this shift. The second part of the book sets out the objective to map the contours of secrecy itself through creative and reflexive methods of encircling. The third and final part of the book sets out ways to develop balanced research strategies that combine researching secret domains with academic integrity and practices of critique. It helps rethink research ethics in practice. Ranging from creatively conceptualising secrecy, post-secrecy, (in)visibility, to thinking about strategies of access and researcher safety, to reflecting on the challenges of entanglement and critique, the authors have generously shared their experiences and best- and worst-case examples. Together, they showcase the multiple, reflexive and productive ways in which secrecy can be navigated in security research.

Suggestions for further reading

- Marieke de Goede and Mara Wesseling (2017) "European Secrecy and Post-9/11 Security Practice", *Journal of European Integration*, 39(3): 253–226.
- Marlies Glasius, Meta de Lange, Jos Bartman, Emanuela Dalmasso, Adele Del Sordi, Aofei Lv, Marcus Michaelsen and Kris Ruijgrok (2018) *Research, Ethics and Risk in the Authoritarian Field*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hugh Gusterson (1998) *Nuclear Rites, A Weapons Laboratory at the End of the Cold War*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Graham M. Jones (2014) "Secrecy", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 43: 53–69.
- Mark B. Salter and Can E. Mutlu (eds) (2013) *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies*. New York: Routledge.
- William Walters and Alex Luscombe (2016) "Hannah Arendt and the Art of Secrecy; Or, the Fog of Cobra Mist", *International Political Sociology*, 11(1): 5–20.

Notes

1 The artwork is currently on display at the Cass Sculpture Foundation in Goodwood, UK (http://www.sculpture.org.uk/artwork/gate-1). Prof. Rob Ward was born in 1949 in Nottingham. He studied at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, The University of Reading,(1973–1975), Rome Academia di Belle Arti and Athens Polytechnion. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors. For more information about Rob Ward's oeuvre see http://www.robwardsculpture.co.uk/ and Rob Ward (ed.) (2009) *Reflections*. Isle of Wight: MakingSpace Publishers.

2 The use of a reflective surface is a conscious and consistent continuation of topics in Rob Ward's work, inspired by artists like Constantin Brancusi and the art-history dimension of the mirror image in the Renaissance. By making the structure of a series of sculptures entirely reflected, the sculpture is "present both in real form and (together with its surroundings) as an image, as an intangible representation" (Wellman 2009: 216).

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