6
Unmaking Security, Remaking Belonging

The refugee raises the question of association beyond, outside, in the margins, or in excess of, established political sociation, because the refugee is by definition asocial, apolitical. Being political, or as one might say the being of politics, is profoundly at issue here, in and through the presence of the refugee.

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Introduction: From unmasking to unmaking security

Previous chapters have unmasked security as a deficient and ineffective policy paradigm with pernicious political effects. They largely supported the view that security has a poor problem-solving record which, ironically, may well have contributed to the conditions they sought to end – for example, increased border control has unwillingly contributed to the emergence of illegal practices such as human trafficking by organized criminal networks. It was also pointed out that continuous articulations of insecurity may eventually undermine the legitimacy of the EU as a credible political actor, as articulations of insecurity risk being interpreted as the incapacity of the EU to manage these issues effectively.

The notion that security practices are ineffective and trigger more insecurity has immediate relevance for policy-makers concerned with the development and maintenance of the EU as an AFSJ. Unfortunately, however, these chapters also pointed out that unmasking security as an ineffective mode of governing with negative ramifications

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for the way in which the Union organizes relations between EU-citizens and third country nationals, were not followed by attempts to unmake security as the dominant framework. In fact, since the 1970s security has become an increasingly important technology for constituting freedom and upholding the Union’s liberal way of life. One of the reasons, arguably, is that the identification of failure and inefficiencies will often not encourage a move away from security but, rather, lead to the development of security measures that do not suffer from identified deficiencies. The introduction of a picture and biometric data on visa are good examples of how the failure of passports in stemming immigration flows has led to the deployment of new technologies for the identification and authorization of their bearers. Similarly, pre-frontier control by means of carrier sanctions, liaison officers and the camp are all technologies that seek to repair the inefficiencies of traditional border control.

A second, closely related reason is that calls for unmaking security lose their appeal as soon as security measures can actually be shown to be effective. While it is doubtful that security measures will ever be constitutive of freedom in the AFSJ (as Chapter 5 showed, freedom is not a pre-social category but a relationship between those who govern and those who are governed), security practices can always claim to be effective in relation to the limited technical goals that they are set to achieve. For instance, readmission agreements, pre-frontier control, carrier sanctions, liaison officers, transit processing and knowledge-based border management may all be considered effective when they succeed in keeping immigrants from arriving on EU territory. Indeed, the mere conversion towards a ‘best practice’ regime, regardless of the actual outcomes of that regime, may be considered a success in a system where the management of immigration increasingly revolves around the coordination and communication between abstract systems of risk management.

The overarching problem is that unmasking security as ineffective will always be framed in terms of more or less security. This downplays, however, the more profound question of whether or not social issues should be securitized at all. The feedback effects security has upon society are not discussed. To unmask is not to unmake. Instrumental arguments about ineffectiveness may well prove ineffective themselves in dismantling a politics of security.

How, then, to unmake security and resist its pernicious effects on distributing belonging in EU-Europe? This final chapter seeks to work