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A climate terrorism assemblage? Exploring the politics of climate change-terrorism-radicalisation relations

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ABSTRACT

Despite a series of claims from Bernie Sanders (2015), Barack Obama (2015), and others arguing that climate change, radicalisation, and terrorism are connected by complex causal relationships, there is very little academic examination of the politics of these claims. Building on DeLanda's (2006) account of assemblages and social complexity, this paper conceptualises climate change-terrorism-radicalisation relationships as a 'climate terrorism assemblage'. A 'climate terrorism assemblage' is a complex, emergent 'whole' formed from a heterogeneous range of interacting geopolitical components (e.g. climatic factors, migration, think tanks and academic publications, and a discourse of 'climate security'). Specifically, a climate terrorism assemblage is characterised by 'strategic territorialisations': context-specific, multi-scalar points at which political claims of causal links between climate change, terrorism, and radicalisation are crystallised. Strategic territorialisations are produced in two, interrelated contexts. First, using the case study of the Syrian Conflict, a climate terrorism assemblage reveals an intricate, contested politics of 'drawing lines' which link climate change, terrorism, and radicalisation. Secondly, the paper argues that, at the points at which causal links are constructed between climate change, terrorism and radicalisation, a climate terrorism assemblage territorialises around intersectional subject formations, in particular a young masculine subject vulnerable to potential radicalisation and terrorism. Overall, the paper concludes that a climate terrorism assemblage provides a productive analytic frame to investigate the contested power relations of climate change-radicalisation-terrorism connections.

1. Introduction

In a 2015 US presidential debate for the Democratic nomination (14th November), contested between Bernie Sanders and Hilary Clinton, Sanders claimed controversially that climate change is 'directly related to the growth of terrorism' (Richardson, 2015). Sanders argued that particular effects of climate changes (e.g. droughts and heatwaves) could exacerbate food and water insecurities, worsen livelihood security, and create political conditions (e.g. unemployment and conflict) that facilitate the recruitment and operations of terrorist groups. These comments are no doubt related to the hype that surrounded the 2015 Paris Conference of Parties ((COP), 30th November-12th December) and subsequent Paris Agreement; as Schäfer, Scheffran, and Penniket (2015) point to, climate security discourses tend to peak at significant geopolitical moments. This paper grapples with the *politics* of these causal claims. Theorising climate change-terrorism-radicalisation linkages as a 'climate terrorism assemblage', the paper makes two claims. Firstly, I argue that climate change-terrorism-radicalisation connections reveal a nuanced politics of attribution about where causal 'lines are drawn': which climate factors are linked to radicalisation or terrorism? Are links drawn at all? How do these links mediate complex causality in a climate terrorism assemblage? These causal attributions, one form of what this paper terms 'strategic territorialisations' in a climate terrorism assemblage, reveal a climate security politics contested by a range of territorialising political components (think tanks, concepts such as 'youth bulge theory', political figures (for example Barack Obama), affects of frustration and subjectifications of young masculinities). In exploring the *politics* of causal connections between climate change, terrorism and radicalisation, I examine the processes of (re)composition of these political components (following DeLanda (2006)). How do different, heterogeneous combinations of components assemble to (de)territorialise a climate terrorism assemblage in ways that reflect particular power relations (about climate change in the context of the War on Terror in the US, for example, or a need to promote climate mitigation and adaptation in the context of the 2015 Conference of Parties)? My second claim is that a second form of 'strategic territorialisation' in a climate terrorism assemblage refers to intersectional subjectivities. In this case, fleeting figurations of young, frustrated, 'African' masculinities permeate

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assumptions about causal links between climate-induced vulnerabilities, radicalisation, and terrorism. Overall, I contend that a climate terrorism assemblage provides an effective means – through tracing its strategic (de)territorialisations – to investigate the politics of climate change-terrorism-radicalisation connections.

These arguments are unpacked in several sections. Firstly, the paper introduces academic and policy debates around climate security, radicalisation and terrorism. Secondly, the paper introduces the concept of a 'climate terrorism assemblage', building on Delanda's (2006) realist account of assemblages and social complexity. Investigating the dynamics of a 'climate terrorism assemblage', the paper first explores a politics of causal attribution for climate change-radicalisation-terrorism connections, drawing on insights from Connolly (2004), Spivak (2012 (1987)), Krenshaw (1991) and Latour (1988) to highlight the tensions between the emergent, complex causalities of a climate terrorism assemblage and the politics of constructing causal 'breaks' – 'drawing lines' – in the processes of the assemblage's (re)composition. Secondly, the paper examines the intersectional subjectivities that permeate these causal interconnections, drawing upon Puar's (2007) reworking of intersectionality to highlight how masculinities are constructed through the contingent territorialisation of multiple components (linguistic signification, affects of anger and frustration, and theories of a 'youth bulge') in a climate terrorism assemblage. Finally, the paper concludes with reflections on 'climate terrorism assemblages' and what this concept offers to critical climate security scholarship.

2. Climate security and terrorism

Climate insecurity can be defined as the conditions 'under which the effects of climate variability and/or change are represented as threatening to a group of affected actors' (Mason, 2014, p. 807). Climate security is concerned with the security implications (for example flooding of military installations) that could arise from the effects of climate variability (e.g. changes to the intensities and frequencies of extreme weather events) (Barnett, 2003). The security implications of climate change have been highlighted in a range American and other international government and think tank reports (Schwartz & Randall, 2003; Campbell et al. 2007; Department of Defense 2010 and 2014). Critical security scholars have also examined themes such as security and climate-induced migration (Boas, 2015; Telford, 2018; White, 2011), discourses of climate security (Detraz & Betsill, 2009; McDonald, 2013; Oels, 2013), and the uptake of 'resilience' by climate security actors (Boas & Rothe, 2016; Rothe, 2016). As De Goede and Randalls (2009) note in their critique of pre-emption strategies, associations have also been drawn between climate change and terrorism. Writing for *Science* magazine, the then UK Chief Scientific Adviser Sir David King (2004, p. 174) writes, in the context of the Bush administration's failure to produce climate action: 'climate change is the most severe problem we face today – more serious even than the threat of terrorism.' Furthermore, Hopkins (2008, original emphasis) writes in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* that 'climate change and the war on terror mix like oil and water', and that 'climate change and violent extremism *must* be delinked in the eyes of the public'. Importantly, however, whilst these authors highlight discursive comparisons between climate change, radicalisation, and terrorism, they do not focus on the *causal connections* between these issues.

Sedgwick (2010) argues that radicalisation can be conceptualised in absolute or relative terms. A relative understanding constructs a continuum between those ideas or individuals deemed 'radical' and 'moderate' and denotes movement along this continuum, raising important questions about political decisions that constitute the continuum and about how 'radical' and 'moderate' are defined (Sedgwick, 2010). An 'absolute' conceptualisation assumes a self-evident, fixed division between 'moderate' and 'radical': radicalisation becomes a zero-sum-game governed by 'Us-versus-Them' imaginative geographies. Richards (2015) critiques conceptions of 'radicalisation' for their overemphasis on individual agency (how an individual is 'radicalised', 'lone wolf' attackers, a person's 'de-radicalisation', etc.) at the expense of underlying socioeconomic and political factors behind 'radicalised' violence. Terrorism is a similarly mercurial concept. Chalecki (2001, p. 3) begins by introducing the US Government's definition (from Title 22, Section 2656 of the U.S. Code): 'premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.' She (2001) identifies four characteristics for acts of terrorism: motivation (ideologies and motives), means (technologies and methods used to execute political violence), targets (the targets of the attack), and enemy (the perceived enemy violence is directed against). However, Coleman (2003) argues that by naming an action as 'terrorism' or identifying 'terrorists', this demarcates an imaginative geography around a targeted 'Us' in need of protection. In this context, the figure of the terrorist can be constructed as deviant and ideologically extreme (Puar & Rai, 2002).

More specifically, terrorism has been linked to environmental factors through the concepts of 'eco-' and 'environmental terrorism'. For Chalecki (2001, p. 3), environmental terrorism constitutes 'the unlawful use of force against *in situ* environmental resources as to deprive populations of their benefit(s) and/or destroy other property.' Potentially dangerous attributes of environmental terrorism include dislocation (environmental resources cross borders, making security mobilisations difficult), and negative economic implications (terrorist attacks can disrupt economic activities, e.g. transportation networks). Chalecki (2001) differentiates between 'resource-as-target' terrorism (ecosystems are the focus of the attack) and 'resource-as-tool' terrorism (environmental resources are coopted as tools of violence). Thus, the environment becomes a tool or target of political violence, with an aspiration to evoke fear in populations. O'Lear (2003) critiques this perspective from two viewpoints. First is to ask what 'the environment' means in an environmental terroristic scenario (for example, does it include energy systems such as dams)? Second, are non-state actors the only perpetrators of environmental terrorism; does state violence play into these debates? More specifically, 'eco-terrorism' describes the destruction of property by radical environmental groups motivated by a biocentric ideology (calling for all living things to have an equal moral status) (Chalecki, 2001). The Earth Liberation Front, a radical environmental group founded in the UK and active in North America, burned down a ski lodge in Vail, Colorado in October 1998, resulting in $12 million of damage (Allhoff & Buciak, 2013). However, in an analysis of illegal activities with an environmental motive in the US (1970–2007), Carson, LaFree, and Dugan (2012) identify 39 incidents in 1989, through to a peak of 159 in 2001, followed by a decrease of 79% through to 2007, showing a decline in crimes (let alone terrorist crimes) with an environmental dimension from the early to mid-2000s.

In the context of possible climate change-terrorism-radicalisation connections, Renard (2008) identifies three types of possible causal relation: 'instigating causes', 'permissive factors', and 'precipitant events'. Instigating causes are deep-rooted causes of terrorism: basic factors necessary for terrorism to develop but that do not automatically produce acts of violence. They include the poverty and income reduction, inequalities between social groups, and the regime type and stability (corrupt governance and authoritarian regimes are argued to be more likely to invoke resentment from subjugated populations) (Renard, 2008). 'Permissive factors' facilitate the use of violence: they are not sufficient or necessary for terrorism, but can contribute to its development (Renard, 2008). Regime instability or 'failed states' could provide space for groups to mobilise outside of legal authority, and regime openness (linked to globalised travel connections and information technologies) could facilitate dissemination of terrorist materials (Renard, 2008). Precipitant events are the final triggers that start a process of violence, e.g. loss of a family member or experience of a disaster (Renard, 2008). Climate change could exacerbate these factors in multiple ways. It could increase poverty (affecting food security and livelihoods) and inequalities (with scarce resources captured by elites,

or grievances invoked by climate injustices), which could act as instigating causes for terrorist activity (Renard, 2008). Renard (2008, p. 44) agrees with the CNA's (2007) conclusion that climate change is a 'threat multiplier': it will not create new permissive factors, but exacerbate existing factors related to terrorism. Mass, Comardicea, and Bodó (2013) argue that it is unlikely large-scale environmental terrorism will occur in the immediate future, but locate two possible pathways through which it might develop. First is 'evolution', in which environmental resources would contribute to the tools or targets of existing terrorists. Second is the 'emergence' of new organisations with different ideologies, strategies, etc. (Mass et al. 2013, p. 212). They argue that it is very difficult to predict how terrorist organisations might develop, let alone to prepare contingencies for every possible form of attack (Mass et al. 2013).

Building on a larger academic literature which explores the links between environmental change and conflict (Homer-Dixon, 1994; Mach et al., 2019; Nordås & Gleditsch, 2007; Selby, 2014), there have been several studies which explore the links between climatic factors and individual or communal participation in political violence (for example joining non-state armed groups (NSAGs)) (Fjelde & von Uexkull, 2012; Vestby, 2014). Salehyan and Hendrix (2014) recognise two theories which postulate links between climate change and participation in political violence. The first is a neo-Malthusian argument that resource scarcities over land, food or water could generate grievances and resource competition as groups fight over the available resources. Second is the opportunity costs model, which suggests that the likelihood of participation in a conflict increases as incomes fall. Thus, if climate change impacts upon economic prosperity (for example through reductions to agricultural yields, flood damages, or availability of pasture for livestock), this could increase the likelihood of individuals participating in political violence (Salehyan & Hendrix, 2014). Using Afrobarometer surveys and the Sun Exposure Protection Index as a measure of climatic change, Vestby (2014) argues that, in a situation where a person's individual living conditions decrease due to drought, this could increase their chance of participation in political violence. However, in a study of the impacts of two typhoons in the Philippines (Bopha in 2012 and Haiyan in 2013), Walch (2018) argues that environmental shocks decrease the likelihood of recruitment to armed rebel groups, in this case the New People's Army. Walch (2018) contends that disasters induce scarcity for rebel combatants, weakening their logistics and supply lines, and therefore affecting their ability to recruit. Additionally, the provision of extensive government assistance and collaboration with international humanitarian actors can both reduce the territorial control of rebel combatants but also make recruitment a riskier process (Walch, 2018). Based on this evidence, Walch (2018) concludes that rebel recruitment was significantly weakened in the aftermath of the typhoons.

In a study of NSAGs, Adelphi (2017, p. III-IV) argue that there is no direct link between climate change and NSAG-derived violence. Instead, climate change impacts can exacerbate fragile, conflict-affected environments and create space for NSAGs to operate (Butts & Bankus, 2013). In particular, Adelphi (2017, p. III-IV) identify three dynamics through climate impacts can exacerbate situations conducive to the growth of NSAGs. First is that climate change contributes to fragility, e.g. with conflicts linked natural resources and livelihood insecurity. NSAGs can proliferate and function more effectively in these environments, especially where there is a lack of state authority or legitimacy ('ungoverned spaces'). Second is that climate change negatively affects livelihoods (particularly through food and water insecurities) in many regions, providing opportunities for NSAGs to offer alternative economic incentives for recruitment or respond to socioeconomic grievances. Finally, NSAGs can use climate-affected environments and natural resources as a weapon, e.g. control of dams (Adelphi, 2017). These accounts build causal chains in which climate change variability exacerbates existing factors – poverty, social tensions, and political instability – and contributes indirectly to NSAG growth.

Fundamentally, any proposed causal connections between climate change, terrorism and radicalisation are almost certainly complex, grounded in multiple systemic feedbacks, and nonlinear (Adelphi, 2017). In a study of responses to the 2010 floods in the Sindh region of Pakistan, Siddiqi (2014) documents her ethnographic work with Islamist group *Jamaat-ud-Dawa* (JuD) as first responders for humanitarian welfare, e.g. with food packages and healthcare. However, she finds no relationship between the withdrawal of government support and an upsurge in JuD support. There were blurred divisions in which JuD representatives interchanged with local politicians, community leaders, army employees and aid workers (Siddiqi, 2014). As Siddiqi (2014, p. 887) writes: 'I argue that while Islamist groups did influence and affect the post-disaster political landscape in southern Sindh, the relationship between climatic disasters and such radical politics is not linear and requires a far more complex analysis.' As such, investigation of climate change-terrorism-radicalisation linkages requires a context-sensitive analysis of complex causal connections. This paper conceptualises climate change-terrorism-radicalisation linkages as a 'climate terrorist assemblage'. With a focus on the politics of causal attribution and on intersectional subjectivities, I examine points at which a 'climate terrorist assemblage' (de)territorialises and what these momentary territorialisations suggest for climate security politics.

3. A 'climate terrorism assemblage'?

As Dittmer (2014) notes, assemblage theory is a productive analytic for engagement with complex geopolitical challenges, including climate change. DeLanda (2006, p. 8) begins from a realist social ontology, the aim of which is to examine processes of assembly for different entities. In this context, assemblages are defined as 'wholes whose properties emerge from interactions between parts' (DeLanda, 2006, p. 10); each assemblage is unique and singular, a consequence of specific historical and geographical processes. Assemblages are characterised by complex interactions between the *properties* of their component parts (the actualized features that define the assemblage), and their *capacities* (the possibilities for an assemblage to affect, to interact with other assemblages in complex ways) (DeLanda, 2006). Capacities enable interaction in innumerable, difficult-to-predict ways, both between component parts within an assemblage and between assemblages. In this sense, assemblages are defined by their emergence: 'a property of the whole that is not shared by, or reducible to its component parts' (Braun, 2008, p. 679). As DeLanda (2006) argues, assemblages interact in nonlinear, complex ways which generate emergent phenomena that are different to that which came before.

For DeLanda (2006), assemblages can be mapped along three axes. The first axis concerns the roles that components in an assemblage can assume. These can be material (e.g. a border wall) at one end of the axis, or expressive at the other (e.g. legislation to enforce border controls). Components often involve a mix of material and expressive roles (DeLanda, 2006; Dittmer, 2014). The second axis concerns the extent to which the assemblage is territorialising or deterritorialising (the extent to which its boundaries and identity are being stabilised and fixed, or destabilised and deconstructed). The final axis concerns how the assemblage is *coded*: how the identity of an assemblage is codified through linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena. DeLanda (2006, p. 14) argues that the components of assemblages are characterised by 'relations of exteriority' that are 'contingently obligatory'; they can be detached from one assemblage and plugged into another with different sets of interactions whilst retaining a degree of autonomy. As such, the properties of the whole (the assemblage) can never be simply explained by aggregating the properties of its component parts: it is the *capacities* of these components that determine how the assemblage changes (Anderson, Kearnes, McFarlane, & Swanton, 2012).

To what extent, however, can one describe a 'climate terrorism assemblage'? Here, my contention is that climate change-terrorism-radicalisation connections can be fruitfully analysed as a 'climate terrorism assemblage' in and of themselves, a context-specific example

of a geopolitical assemblage. A 'climate terrorism assemblage' is composed of heterogeneous components – material realities (shifting climate patterns, availability and access to food, documents produced by think tanks), discursive constructions (the concept of 'climate security'), affective resonances, territorialisations of complex causality, and intersectional subject formations. These elements can interchange and interact with component parts of other assemblages, but a 'climate terrorism assemblage' is implicated in context-specific historical and geographical trajectories, a complex, open 'whole' with distinctive codifications. This paper will explore how different material and nonmaterial components of a climate terrorism assemblage are implicated in the causal politics of its (re)constitution. These include speech acts (for example from Barack Obama), geopolitical reports (from the United States' National Intelligence Council), affective resonances (the 'anger' and 'frustration' of young males whose vulnerability is affected by climate insecurities), and conceptual tools which affect a climate terrorism assemblage's orientation (e.g. 'youth bulge theory' and the concept of a 'threat multiplier'). These components are primarily derived from an American climate security context (e.g. American think tanks such as the Center for Naval Analyses and political figures such as Barack Obama); as Diez, von Lucke, and Wellman (2016) note, the United States, particularly the American defense and security sectors, are by far the most prominent producers of climate security discourse and components of a climate terrorism assemblage. Whilst other climate security contexts are important for the perpetuation of climate security discourses, this paper focuses on components of a climate terrorism assemblage that originate from US political contexts. Building on Delanda's (2006) approach, I contend that a 'climate terrorist assemblage' provides a potent analytic framework to examine the unequal politics of climate change-terrorism-radicalisation connections. In particular, I focus on two sites of territorialisation for a climate terrorism assemblage: a politics of causal complexity and attribution, and intersectional subject formations in climate change-terrorism-radicalisation connections. These sites are examined using two examples from climate security politics: the Syrian Civil War and development of ISIS, and discussions of young masculinities implicated in conditions of climate insecurity.

4. Causal complexity: a politics of attribution?

DeLanda (2006) argues that assemblage thinking challenges a linear, efficient model of causality (what he (2006: 20) terms 'same cause, same effect, always', the notion that a particular cause will produce a particular effect in every context) in several respects. Firstly, particular 'triggers' or 'catalytic' factors can cause a range of different effects within the same assemblage; there is no necessary reason why the same cause must always produce the same effect. Secondly, there is no strict reason why a particular cause will *always* produce the same effect. To illustrate this, DeLanda (2006, p. 21) uses the causal statement 'smoking causes cancer'. For populations of assemblages (in this case of human actors), smoking may lead to cancer in a percentage of cases, but because of the different environmental conditions and genetic characteristics of individuals within the population, cancer will not develop in every case. The development of cancer can be understood probabilistically, in terms of *statistical causality*. For these two reasons, DeLanda (2006) argues that simple linear causality ('same cause, same effect, always') is limited in an assemblage context. Instead, there are 'reciprocal forms of determination between parts that can be accommodated via nonlinear mechanisms involving feedback' (DeLanda, 2006, p. 21). Because of these complex, nonlinear causal interactions, the properties of the assemblage as a whole are more than an aggregation of its component parts.

Connolly (2005) extends Delanda's (2006) logic to explore political complexity. He (2005) argues that linear, efficient causality – the notion that factors can be separated out and explored in isolation to determine which factors cause the others – is insufficient to explain political complexity. Indeed, as Connolly (2005, pp. 869–70, original emphasis) writes: 'in politics … causality morphs into energized complexities of mutual imbrication and interinvolvement, in which heretofore unconnected or loosely associated elements *fold, bend, blend, emulsify, and dissolve into each other*, forging a qualitative assemblage resistant to classical models of explanations.' Causal interactions are complex resonances: they involve emergent interactions between different elements in heterogeneous, multiple ways. Causal interactions are emergent in three senses: firstly, in that the characteristics of causal interactions are not knowable in precise detail prior to the effects that emerge from these interactions; secondly, the effects become infused into causal interactions to the extent that it can be difficult to disentangle the causes from effects; and thirdly that a series of feedback loops operate between each level of causal interaction (Connolly, 2005). A logical implication of this approach is that emergent causation is not susceptible to complete explanation. Given that the effects of emergent causation cannot be precisely predicted or fully conceptualised in advance, this makes it impossible to have full explanations of the assemblages involved (Connolly, 2004). As DeLanda (2006) notes, empirical analysis of assemblages is *causal*, not *conceptual*: there is a focus on examining a range of actual and possible causal interactions, not on provision of an exhaustive theoretical model. Connolly (2004, pp. 344–5) argues that political analysis in this context should seek to make strategic interventions in these assemblages: to use combinations of evaluation, participation and explanation to 'move the complex in this way or that'. This paper investigates the politics of complex causal interventions in a climate terrorism assemblage. How, in an attempt to delineate the complex causalities of a climate terrorism assemblage, are particular power relations and subjectivities territorialised? How are causal lines drawn which create a semblance of 'pattern' and 'explanation' and how do these influence the assemblage's trajectory?

In asking these questions, there are several important qualifications. Firstly, I do not assume that, in the process of causal lines being 'drawn' in a climate terrorism assemblage, it is a single, sovereign actor doing the 'drawing'. As Anderson et al. (2012) note, an implication of assemblage thinking is that causality is no longer centred in a sovereign, pre-given agent, but in the differential assembly of heterogeneous parts. Causal interactions in a climate terrorism assemblage do not rest with a sovereign agent that can make decisions in the abstract, but are the consequence of a distributed assemblage which constitutes agency as an effect of multiple, heterogeneous interactions. In this sense, the climate terrorism assemblage (inclusive of political claims about causal relationships between climate change, terrorism and radicalisation) is composed of multiple, heterogeneous components that interact in particular ways. The focus in this paper is on speech acts, geopolitical reports and conceptual tools (which, through discursive signification, are components which play expressive roles in coding a climate terrorism assemblage). However, a climate terrorism assemblage is also assembled from components which play material roles, e.g. physical changes in climate, experiences of rural-urban migration, depletions in agricultural outputs, computers which transmit messages, speeches and reports on climate insecurities, the physical realities of a think tank office and its environs, and the biochemical and electrical constitutions of human actors implicated in climate security debates (e.g. Barack Obama or Bernie Sanders).

Secondly, in assuming that particular political interests are territorialised at points where causal lines are drawn between climate change, terrorism and radicalisation, I do not assume that this 'drawing' process takes place 'outside' of a climate terrorism assemblage. This idea is analogous with Harraway's (1988) critique of the 'god trick' in scientific research: the idea that a scientist can stand outside of the system which they are observing and make objective, detached observations. Instead, the power relations and subjectivities implicated in a climate terrorism assemblage are themselves components of this assemblage and other related assemblages. In 'drawing' causal lines, they are themselves influencing the causal interactions and trajectory of a climate terrorism

assemblage. Whilst there is a need to analyse these relationships, this analysis is always inseparable from the assembly and trajectories of the climate terrorism assemblage more broadly. This paper focuses on the politics of these assembling processes: to understand the role that causal claims play in the (re)composition of a climate terrorism assemblage.

There are fundamental political questions about 'where the lines are drawn', which factors are connected to climate change at particular points in the causal chain, and which combinations of assemblage components create and reproduce climate change-terrorism-radicalisation causal chains. These spatio-temporal territorialisations, processes of 'drawing lines' or 'connecting the dots' on the complex causal pathways that link climate change, terrorism, and radicalisation, represent particular crystallisations of unequal power relations in a climate terrorist assemblage. They are attempts to code a climate terrorism assemblage, to delimit it: the notion that climate change impacts *do* increase fragility, a *denial* that climate change plays a role, or casting doubts about the *extent to which* climate plays a role. These attributions are what I term *strategic territorialisations*, attempts to isolate, demarcate or codify ('drawing lines') complex causal interactions in a climate terrorist assemblage. Using the example of the Syrian Civil War and growth of ISIS, I argue that these territorialisations of a climate terrorist assemblage – by a range of political interests – reveal a cautious, nuanced politics of attribution.

From what started as a series of protests in March (2011) in the rural town of Dara'a, the Syrian Civil War has escalated into a major humanitarian crisis (De Châtel, 2014). Two high-profile studies (Gleick, 2014; Kelley, Mohtadi, Cane, Seagar, & Kushnir, 2015) have analysed this topic in relation to climate change, with the latter asserting that there is evidence the conflict in Syria is linked to a climate change-affected drought. They argue that a drought in the late 2000s was the worst on instrumental record in Syria and neighbouring countries, leading to rural-urban migration of farmers to Syrian cities, dissatisfaction with the Assad Government's agricultural policies, and contributing to broader grievances behind the 2011 uprisings and Civil War. Kelley et al. (2015) contend that anthropogenic climate change made the 2007-10 drought three times more likely than by natural forcing alone, and conclude that climate change impacts, indirectly, are implicated in the Syrian conflict. From this thesis, Adelphi (2017) claim that the instability caused by the drought and outbreak of sectarian conflict enabled groups such as ISIS and Al-Nusra to gain control over large swathes of Syrian territory (in 2014). For those whose livelihoods were affected by food and water insecurities, ISIS offered economic opportunities; they also financed infrastructure and provided social provision, e.g. basic healthcare services, in order to build public legitimacy. Through its control of water infrastructure in occupied regions, ISIS could also increase hardship in water-scarce regions (e.g. by controlling flows and electricity supplies from dams) (Adelphi, 2017). For both the generally unstable environment characterised by the conflict, and facilitation of recruitment, Adelphi (2017) contend that climate change is related to the development of ISIS.

However, these studies are contested (De Châtel, 2014; Fröhlich, 2016; Selby, Dahi, Fröhlich, & Hulme, 2017). Selby et al. (2017) break down the 'Syria-climate conflict' thesis into three stages: first, that the late 2000s drought is linked to anthropogenic climate change; second, that this drought led to large-scale internal migration; and third, that these internal migrants contributed to the unrest (2011) which led to the outbreak of the conflict. The authors note that it is extremely difficult to attribute the 2006-9 drought directly to global anthropogenic climate change (Selby et al. 2017). Kelley et al. (2015) and Gleick (2014) also take relatively little account of political-economic factors that influenced migration. This includes a decisive turn towards trade liberalisation and the removal of agricultural subsidies (for instance for fuel in May 2008, which led to an overnight 342% rise in fuel prices), as well as long-term mismanagement of irrigation and water management policies (De Châtel, 2014; Selby et al. 2017). In an interview study with 30 families from drought-affected rural Syrian governates, Fröhlich (2016) finds that it is unlikely that migrants to towns such as Dara'a contributed to the March 2011 protests, and instead migrated for work reasons. Overall, Selby et al. (2017) conclude that for each step of the Syria-climate conflict causal chain, there is at present no substantive evidence to suggest that climate change was a causal factor in the Syrian conflict. Importantly, these debates also reveal a nuanced politics of causal attribution. Such a politics is focused on where the causal links are drawn in attempts to situate connections between climate change, climate-induced migration, terrorism, and radicalisation and which strategic political interests these causal connections reflect. For example, in a speech to graduates of the US coastguard academy (New London, Connecticut (20th May 2015)), Barack Obama states:

> Rising seas are already swallowing low-lying islands, from Bangladesh to Pacific islands … Globally, we could see a rise in climate refugees. And I guarantee you the coastguard will have to respond. Elsewhere, more intense droughts will exacerbate shortages of water and food, increase competition for resources, and create the potential for mass migrations and new tensions. All of which is why the Pentagon calls climate change a "threat multiplier."
>
> Understand, climate change did not cause the conflicts we see around the world. Yet what we also know is that severe drought helped to create the instability in Nigeria that was exploited by the terrorist group Boko Haram. It's now believed that drought and crop failures and high food prices helped fuel the early unrest in Syria, which descended into civil war in the heart of the Middle East.

In this speech act, Obama draws indirect connections between climate changes, the Syrian drought, and the outbreak of conflict. He illustrates carefully the causal chains connecting these phenomena: a drought, agricultural depletions, large-scale migration, political unrest, and 'war in the heart of the Middle East'. Drought is also linked, in a different context, to the growth of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Obama is clear that climate change is not a direct cause of the war in Syria: 'Understand, climate change did not cause the conflicts we see around the world'. He does suggest that climate change is related (through complex, indirect causal pathways – a 'threat multiplier' effect) to political violence and conflict, but is categorical that climate change is not a direct cause. It could be that he does not want to suggest that climate change is 'causing' the Syrian conflict because of its implications for the culpability of political actors for the conflict (e.g. ISIS and Asad's government). He is thus being cautious about the extent to which he draws causal links between climate change, civil war, and outbreaks of violence.

Writing for the sceptical think tank The Heritage Foundation (2015), Peter Brookes, a Senior Fellow in National Security Affairs, critiques the Obama administration's associations of climate change and terrorism. Brookes (2015) writes that it is 'substantively wrong to link climate change and terrorism – whether directly or indirectly. And relating the two to create a sense of national security urgency is not only misleading – it is dangerous because it distracts us from today's very real, very immediate life-and-death threats from terrorism.' He (2015) claims that it is wrong to link climate change and terrorism not only because this would be inaccurate, but also because this association detracts from the threats of terrorism. However, in making this argument in the context of a sceptical think tank (the Heritage Foundation (Dunlap & Jacques, 2013)), it could also be that Brookes wants to dissociate climate change and terrorism in order to devalue climate change concerns in the US Government. From a different perspective, that of the right-wing news outlet Breitbart, Martel (2014) reports on the release of the 2014 Center for Naval Analyses Military Advisory Board's report *National Security and the Accelerating Risks of Climate Change*. The title of Martel's (2014) piece is: 'Climate change, not Islam, is catalyst for terrorism, Arab Spring, Syrian war'. She (2014) also notes that 'the report goes on to blame climate change for a number of political phenomena that are notably linked by an obvious culprit: radical Islam'. From Martel's

perspective, writing for Breitbart, it could be that drawing causal relationships between terrorism and climate change is problematic not only because climate change is considered an inadequate causal factor, but also because it detracts away from other causes of political violence, i.e. 'Islam' and 'radical Islam'.

What these examples reveal is a nuanced, contested politics of attribution for climate change-terrorism-radicalisation interconnections. Obama draws lines between factors in a complex causal chain, but is careful to situate the indirect causal implications of climate impacts. Similarly, for different political reasons, Brookes (about the central importance of terrorism as an issue), and Martel (the central role of 'Islam' and 'radical Islam' in terrorism), draw different kinds of causal relationships which do not identify the role of climate change. For a climate terrorist assemblage composed of many different components (documents, discourses of 'climate security', migration decisions, droughts, legislation) that interact in causally complex, non-deterministic ways, these interventions represent an attempt to delineate or codify these complex causal relations, to 'draw lines' on which components produce intra-agential interactions in particular moments. Framed by political contestation and ideological differences, these delineations represent 'fixes' or territorialisations of a climate terrorism assemblage, attempts to *explain* climate change-terrorism-radicalisation relations. As Latour (1988) states, explanations involve establishing relations between two lists, one list (A) involving an inventory of things to be explained (food and water insecurities, migrations, outbreaks of violence), and another list (B) providing the factors to be the explanation (climate change impacts, e.g. droughts). The power of the explanation rests in its ability to link items from list A to causal factors in list B: the ability of the explanation to establish links *across contexts,* to act or 'explain' across *distance*. As such, explanations can be defined as '*a measure of a distance between contexts*' (Latour, 1988, p. 160, original emphasis). To bridge these contexts requires epistemological *work*, networks of social actants that constitute explanations as a process of 'empire-building' (Latour, 1988, p. 161). Obama, Martel and Brookes all attempt to draw explanatory lines between lists 'A' and 'B', to establish causal relations at a distance (whether between climate change and terrorism, to refute these linkages, or between 'radical Islam' and terrorism).

A causal 'line' in this instance is formed through multiple components of an assemblage interacting to produce the discursive effect of a causal relationship between these factors. As assemblage components, these speech acts assume an expressive role that – through linguistic signification – codifies a climate terrorism assemblage according to particular causal chains (linking climate change, terrorism and radicalisation). They assemble alongside the human assemblages of Obama, Martel and Brookes, and a network of think tanks and political organisations involved in climate change debates (the White House, Department of Defense, Center for Naval Analyses, Environmental Protection Agency, Heritage Foundation, etc.) to compose the causal lines that define the assemblage. These moments – 'drawing lines' – constitute what I term 'strategic territorialisations': interventions to fix the complex causal interactions (to build explanatory power between components 'A' and 'B') between an assemblage's components. Strategic territorialisations derive from Spivak's (2012(1987), p. 205, original emphasis) notion of 'strategic essentialism': 'a *strategic* use of positive essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest'. A call for strategic essentialist strategies responds to a 'constitutive paradox' in poststructuralist, antihumanist thought: "that the essentialising moment, the object of their criticism, is irreducible' (Spivak, 2012 (1987), p. 205). Spivak recognises that essentialising moments, whilst always already contingent, are impossible to avoid. Strategic territorialisations represent moments at which the climate terrorist assemblage is fixed: attempts to freeze-frame complex causal relations between climate impacts (drought), food insecurity, migration, conflict, and terrorism into delineated causal chains. These territorialisations are *strategic* in the sense that unequal power relations ('visible political interests') cross scales. Causal linkages not only highlight micro-scale links between factors in a causal argument (the likelihood of food insecurity exacerbating migration, for example), but also feed into to broader discourses (to promote climate mitigation and adaptation, to emphasise the War on Terrorism, to delegitimise climate change policies, or to fight against 'radical Islam'). Importantly, however, I contend that *strategic essentialisations* are not only attempts to 'explain' complex causal dynamics in a climate terrorism assemblage, but are also moments at which intersectional subject formations are crystallised. In moments where a climate terrorism assemblage is composed (from speech acts, institutions, human actors), 'lines are drawn' between climatic variability, livelihood insecurities, migration, and possibilities of political violence), a climate terrorism assemblage territorialises around intersectional subject formations. These subject formations are constructed as both a response to, and as constitutive of, conditions of climate insecurity. Specifically, I argue that a climate terrorism assemblage constellates around young, 'frustrated' masculinities in climate security debates.

5. Intersectionality and a climate terrorism assemblage

DeLanda (2006) argues that subjectivity within an assemblage can be conceptualised as distributed assembly of subpersonal components – impressions, posture, thoughts, habits, skills, etc. – which have particular capacities (e.g. to make decisions or produce speech acts). Subjectivities within a climate terrorism assemblage assemble a variety of different components: in this section I argue that speech acts, concepts of intersectional subject formation, particular theoretical tools (in particular 'youth bulge theory'), public actors, and national security reports are assembled together to form particular moments of strategic territorialisation. Building on Delanda's (2006) foundation, I utilise Puar's (2007) critique of intersectional theory from the perspective of assemblage theory. Krenshaw (1991, p. 1296), defines intersectionality as 'a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identities and the on-going necessity of group politics.' She (1991: 1245) differentiates between different forms of intersectionality. First is structural intersectionality, the multiple structural factors that make the experiences of women of colour fundamentally different to those of White women. Second is political intersectionality, the ways in which feminist and antiracist movements both fight against patriarchy, sexism and racism, but do not always account for the particular inequalities experienced by women of colour. Third is representational intersectionality, concerned with the discursive and cultural construction of women of colour (Krenshaw, 1991). Writing about the double, mutually reinforcing oppressions experienced by women of colour in the US, Krenshaw (1991) argues that identity categories, whilst socially constructed, have material, exclusionary effects. Puar (2007) critiques intersectionality models which suggest that identities must be named, fixed or stabilised. Contrastingly, assemblage thinking is 'more attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency' (Puar, 2007, p. 213). Puar (2007) draws on Massumi's (2002) critique of identities as embedded in ontologies of 'position'. Massumi (2002) argues that 'positions' are secondary to an ontological field of emergence: a field of affective potentiality that is perpetual, immanent, and with no boundaries of interiority or exteriority. Massumi (2002, p. 7) contends that signification is located in a zone 'of arrest', a derivative 'second-order movement between back-formed possibilities'. In terms of cultural and social determinations of position (e.g. gender or race), Massumi (2002, p. 8) notes that these are secondary in the sense that they back-form their reality. This does not establish an ontological separation from potentiality: Massumi (2002, p. 8) maintains that cultural determinations feed back into their processes of emergence. They are inseparable, but there is nonetheless an ontological difference between the field of emergence and positionings that emerge from this.

Puar (2007) agrees with Massumi's theorisation, and argues that

intersectional subjectivities are byproducts of 'positionings' in an assemblage, attempts to quell an assemblage's perpetual mobility. Subjectivities can be considered as a form of strategic territorialisation within a climate terrorism assemblage. They represent points at which different components are composed – affects of 'frustration' and 'anger', National Intelligence Council reports, particular words ('young', 'dissatisfied', 'male'), and identity constructions (conceptions of masculinity) – and territorialise at points of causal connection between climate change, terrorism and radicalisation. As such, a climate terrorism assemblage is partially (re)comprised of intersectional (re) territorialisations that are back-formed against these immanent conditions of emergence. In this context, the idea of a sovereign, determining or operating 'subject' is instead a 'subject-effect' (Spivak, 2012 (1987), p. 204): an effect of heterogeneous, discontinuous networks comprised of many strands, e.g. history, ideology, economy, etc. Different configurations of these strands (components in a climate terrorism assemblage) produce the effect of a sovereign subject, and each strand is simultaneously woven into many others (Spivak, 2012 (1987)). In a climate terrorism assemblage, intersectional subject formations represent one form of strategic territorialisation: context-specific 'subject-effects' in climate security politics. At the points at which the causal 'lines are drawn' in a climate terrorist assemblage, attempts to isolate causal connections between a range of factors that link climate change, radicalisation and terrorism (for example migration, or outbreaks of protests against authoritarian governments), I argue that an intersectional subjectivity is constructed of a young, frustrated masculinity that is vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist groups. Thus, a climate terrorism assemblage territorialises strategically around a particular subject formation in these moments of causal connection. I touch on three speech acts and a theoretical tool ('youth bulge theory') as components which are important for the codification of this subject formation in a climate terrorism assemblage. Firstly, in an interview held with Thomas Friedman for the *New York Times* (June 9th, 2014), Barack Obama (cited by Barron-Lopez, 2014) discusses the environments within which terrorist activities can take place:

> 'When people are hungry, when there are a lot of young people, particularly young men, who are drifting without prospects of the future, the fertility of the soil for terrorism ends up being significant'

Speaking to *HuffPost Live* (December 3rd, 2015) during the same period as the Paris Climate Conference, the American science writer Bill Nye (cited by Melinno, 2015) discusses the links between climate change, the Syrian Civil War, and the development of NSAG groups:

> 'There is a water shortage in Syria, this is fact-based – small and medium farmers have abandoned their farms because there's not enough water … And especially the young people who have not grown up there … the young people have gone to the big cities looking for work … there's not enough work for everybody, so the disaffected youths … the young people who don't believe in the system, believe the system has failed, don't believe in the economy – are more easily engaged and more easily recruited by terrorist organisations, and then they end up part way around the world in Paris shooting people'

In these excerpts, Obama and Nye speculate on the identity characteristics of individuals who are vulnerable to terrorism and radicalisation in conditions of climate insecurity. Obama claims that in situations where 'people are hungry' as a result of food and water insecurities generated by climate impacts, especially where there is a large population of young people, this creates conditions that can lead to terrorism. In particular, it is 'young men' who are identified as creating a 'significant', 'fertile' soil for the development of terrorist activities. Interviewed over a year later on the specific example of the Syrian Civil War, Bill Nye identifies a similar causal chain to Obama grounded in agricultural insecurity, rural-urban migration, disaffection, and terrorist activity. Nye repeatedly isolates the individuals involved in these social processes as 'young': the 'young people' who have grown up, become disaffected and moved to cities for work, and the 'disaffected youth' who 'don't believe in the system', are 'more easily engaged and more easily recruited by terrorist organisations', and end up 'in Paris shooting people'. Nye, whilst he does not identify a link with young males, draws a more direct connection between the actions and disaffections of young people and terrorist violence (linking these to the Paris terror attacks in 2015). Given that he is speaking contemporaneously with the (2015) Paris Climate Summit, as with similar comments from Bernie Sanders, it could be that Nye is trying to draw attention to these issues and to climate change more broadly.

However, in both of their commentaries, Barack Obama and Bill Nye, whilst drawing upon different contexts (Obama discussing the general causal mechanisms and Nye the Syrian Civil War and its links to terrorism and climate change), construct a young and (in Obama's case) male subjectivity that is particularly prone to or vulnerable to terrorism. In these instances a climate terrorism assemblage territorialises at particular points of causal connection – the point of rural-urban migration and subsequent economic and political frustration – and these territorialisations crystallise as intersectional subject formations. As a second example, I draw on a report from the National Intelligence Council (NIC), an interagency group that supports the Director of National Intelligence ((DNI), the US President's highest advisor on national security issues). The NIC are a central component of the institutional actors which compose a climate terrorism assemblage: climate security discourses in the US are targeted primarily towards the defense sector and security-oriented think tanks (e.g. the Department of Defense, Center for a New American Security, and Center for Naval Analyses) and it is not uncommon for political officials to move between government and think tank positions (Diez et al., 2016). The NIC publish long-term analyses for the US intelligence community (e.g. the Department of State, CIA and National Security Agency) (DNI, 2015). For the Estimate, the NIC also produced a series of regional reports and consultations about the geopolitical implications of climate change (to 2030); as products of consultations, these documents do not represent the views of the US government (NIC 2009). Discussing climate insecurities in North African cities, the NIC note (2009, p. 15):

> 'Cities like Cairo, Casablanca, Alexandria, Algiers, and Oran are already overflowing with thousands of angry and unemployed young men who congregate in ghetto-like environments passing their days leaning on walls with little to no hope of escaping their fate.'

Later in the document (p.19), these claims are elaborated:

> 'Islamic extremists across the region may exploit climate change's destabilizing impacts and ineffective state responses to promote the spread of militancy and anti-regime violence. Indeed, Islamist militants could point to climate-induced catastrophes as evidence as God's wrath against "apostate regimes" whose un-Islamic behaviour has plunged the region into desperate circumstances … Moreover, Islamic extremist groups could take advantage of dire socioeconomic conditions to recruit more followers, particularly among disaffected youth in the shanty towns of Morocco and Algeria. The concentration of unattached, unemployed young men in overstressed North Africa cities as well as disaffected, marginalized rural communities under acute climatic stress will provide ideal recruiting grounds for extremists.'

In these excerpts, a climate terrorism assemblage crystallises around affective resonances of hopelessness, anger, susceptibility to Islamist extremist ideologies and disaffection. Adjectives such as 'overstressed' and 'overflowing' manufacture an image of overstretched urban environments and communities at 'bursting' or 'boiling point', a simmering anger and dissatisfaction. These excerpts also reinforce a subjectivity of

fatalism and hopelessness among young men in North African cities, e.g. with the phrase 'little hope of escaping their fate'. An representation of fatalism is also engendered earlier in the report when the NIC (2009, pp. 18–19) claim: 'North Africans tend to hold a religiously-based view that "what will be, will be." Owing to this fatalistic mindset, North Africans are unlikely to blame the state for climate related stresses.' In one sense, this suggests a generalised fatalism that separates 'North Africans' from their agency to react in different ways to climate-insecure situations. This could be reinforced through the imagery of idleness implied by young men 'passing their days leaning on walls'. If young men are dissatisfied and unemployed, they may be vulnerable to Islamist ideas which 'point to climate-induced catastrophe as evidence of God's wrath against "apostate regimes."' Finally, young men are said to be 'angry', which creates an image of frustrated, anti-Western young men who are susceptible to 'Islamist ideas' in conditions of climate insecurity. Moreover, North African males are at their most 'risky' in congregation, with a 'concentration of unattached, unemployed young men' and 'thousands of angry and unemployed young men who congregate in ghetto-like environments'. In this speech act, a variety of components – affective resonances of frustration and anger, ideological concepts ('anti-Westernism' and 'Islamism') – are assembled to form a young masculine subjectivity in a climate terrorism assemblage.

Alongside speech acts, theoretical tools also form an important underpinning for a climate terrorism assemblage, for example 'youth bulge theory'. Developed in 1985 by geographer Garry Fuller whilst a visiting scholar to the CIA's Office of Global Issues, 'youth bulge' theory was designed to provide intelligence analysts with a tool to predict national security threats (Hendrixson, 2014). A 'youth bulge' is a scenario whereby people aged 15–24 represent above 20% of a national population (Hendrixson, 2014). It is argued to correlate – when combined with poor educational opportunities, unemployment and unequal resource allocations – with an increased propensity towards violence (Dowd, 2015). Noting the racialized and gendered assumptions of 'youth bulge' theory, Hendrixson (2014, p. 8) argues: 'personified as a discontented, angry young man, almost always a man of colour, the "youth bulge" is seen as an unpredictable, out-of-control force in the South generally, with Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia and Latin America all considered hotspots.' Overall, she (2014) contends that such assertions of grand numbers of young men in congregation are reductionist, strip young men of their agency and subjectivity (particularly in reaction to conditions of climate insecurity), and do not account for the diversity of young male – and female – experiences. Youth bulge theory functions as an important component which – in interaction with other components, e.g. affects of frustration and speech acts – folds into the moments at which a climate terrorism assemblage strategically territorialises around a young, masculine subjectivity.

During the War on Terror, homonormative and heteronormative patriotism has been apparent in sections of the US media and politics (Kunstman, Haritaworn, & Petzen, 2010). Supposedly protecting US citizens from Islam's inherent homophobia, 'Muslim' masculinities have been pathologised (for instance a diagnosis of terrorists' martyrdom (based on the promise of sexual pleasure in paradise) as failed heterosexuality) and queered mockingly in opposition to a masculinist, nationalist US imaginary (Puar & Rai, 2002). Collectively, these discourses manufacture a figure of a homosocial, violent, 'Muslim' male figure (Puar & Rai, 2002). Puar (2007, p. 222) argues that terrorist assemblages invoke a need to theorise such queered bodies, including 'suicide bombers', 'queer drag queens', 'the monster-terrorist-fag', and the 'tortured Muslim body', among others. In the specific context of a climate terrorism assemblage, the figure of the 'climate terrorist' (Chaturvedi and Doyle (2015, p. 135)) – crystallised as a young, male, frustrated migrant – represents an Othered, threatening subjectivity. The figure of the 'climate terrorist' is a particular strategic territorialisation, one that territorialises a range of different components – anti-Western discourses, racialized, affective intensities of 'frustration' and economic 'hopelessness', and climate-induced food insecurities – in a climate terrorism assemblage. It is also *strategically* territorialised with broader terrorist assemblages, feeding into broader exclusionary discourses that construct young, 'African' males and circumscribe their possibilities (emphasising a vulnerability to terrorist violence) in climate-insecure futures. These strategic territorialisations – 'subject-effects' of young masculinities – are racialized, gendered components of a climate terrorist assemblage. However, they are also situated more specifically in the unequal power relations that constitute connections drawn between climate change, terrorism and radicalisation. When these causal links are drawn, for example between the risks of food and water scarcities, rural-urban migration, decreased livelihoods and political dissatisfaction, one manifestation of the 'risks' or 'threats' in climate-insecure futures is constructed as a young African male who is fatalistic, frustrated, and vulnerable to radicalisation and extremist violence. Thus, as part of attempts to 'draw lines' or to 'fix' a climate terrorism assemblage according to particular interpretations of causal relations, one form in which strategic territorialisations take is *subjectification* in scenarios of future climate insecurity.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that climate change-terrorism-radicalisation connections can be productively conceptualised as a 'climate terrorism assemblage'. Assemblage thinking, through the concept of strategic territorialisation, locates debates about complex causality in a nuanced, contested politics of attribution. Particular combinations of components in a climate terrorism assemblage 'draw' – territorialise – causal links that reflect underlying political interests. Additionally, a climate terrorist assemblage reveals how intersectional identities – constellations that produce 'subject-effects' – are constituted in conditions of climate insecurity: a young, male, economically frustrated and radicalised climate migrant. As such, strategic territorialisations can underwrite processes of Othering in climate change-terrorism-radicalisation dynamics, particularly at points where causal connections are drawn in these contexts.

Importantly, there are key limitations to this approach. Methodologically, the examples in this paper draw upon textual, discursive materials from climate security debates (e.g. political speeches and policy reports). As such, this analysis relies to a large extent upon representational analysis and critique of the political contexts that inform climate security discourses. However, this raises key limitations for analysing a climate terrorism assemblage, a formation composed of material, affective resonances alongside enunciative and codified materials. As such, this account risks what Tolia-Kelly (2011) terms 'surface geographies': descriptions and collages of the materialities of places, things and representations, but without a connection to the political and theoretical contexts of material realities. In light of this critique, further study is needed of how a climate terrorism assemblage (de)territorialises and its concomitant trajectories: which material and enunciative, human and nonhuman elements interact in these processes?

Finally, what does this theorisation – a climate terrorism assemblage – offer to critical climate security scholarship? First, the paper offers an empirical account of the politics of climate change, terrorism and radicalisation connections (focusing on claims about causal attribution and subjectivities composed at these causal intersections), adding to the broader literature on climate security politics (e.g. McDonald, 2013). Secondly, this paper's contribution is to theorise these relationships in the context of casual complexity: to understand the role that particular power relations play in composing causal claims in a climate terrorism assemblage. Assemblage thinking provides a clear way to trace interventions in this complexity in climate security issues, to use analysis and evaluation to 'move the complex in this way or that', as Connolly (2004, pp. 334–5) suggests. However, as Braun (2008) notes, what does assemblage theory, new materialist and neo-vitalist scholarship offer beyond assertions that social processes are 'relational' and thick empirical descriptions of these relations? How can it influence policy

debates? One tentative conclusion is that a climate terrorism assemblage is perpetually open to change; it is fundamentally dynamic and open to potential futurities. This desensitises attempts to naturalise or strategically territorialise unequal power relations – rendering climate security (and climate change-terrorism-radicalisation relations) always open to critique, interrogation of its historical and geographical contexts, and analysis of its contingent, fragile compositions.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

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